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# THE VICAR APOSTOLIC OF KEEWATIN, CANADA

Bishop OVIDE CHARLEBOIS, o.m.i.

(1862-1933)



Translated from the French of  
Rev. J. M. PÉNARD, o.m.i.

By MARY AGATHA GRAY



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**THE VICAR APOSTOLIC  
OF KEEWATIN**

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+ *Martin Lajeunesse, O.M.I.*  
*Vic. Ap. du Keewatin.*

*and Vicar of the Missions.*  
Bishop's House, Le Pas, Manitoba, June 17th, 1937.

Nihil obstat

Jacques de MARTIGNY, priest.  
*Censor ad hoc.*

Montreal, December 19th, 1937

Imprimatur

† Em. A. DESCHAMPS, v.g.,  
*Bishop of Thémésis and Auxiliary of Montreal.*

Montreal, December 20th, 1937





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# THE VICAR APOSTOLIC OF KEEWATIN, CANADA

Bishop OVIDE CHARLEBOIS, O.M.I.  
(1862-1933)

Translated from the French of  
Reverend J. M. Pénard, O.M.I.

By MARY AGATHA GRAY

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## DECLARATION

In conformity with Pope Urban the Eight's decree, we declare that the words "holiness," "holy," "miracle," "miraculous," which are used in this book, have but a purely "human" and "private" value.





## INTRODUCTORY LETTER

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Archbishop's House,

Quebec, March 25, 1936.

Rev. Father J. M. Pénard, O.M.I.,  
Le Pas, Manitoba.

Dear Reverend Father,

I have finished reading the life of Bishop Charlebois that you agreed to write, and hasten to express my satisfaction and offer you my congratulations.

Perhaps some writers might have delved more deeply into psychological analysis, or employed a greater wealth of literary adornments, but your simple narration of the daily life of this heroic apostle reveals his soul the more truly thus, his soul that is so profound beneath its secluding shell, so warm despite the chill of his inherent shyness, and the long periods of isolation to which he had become accustomed.

He was certainly a very holy missionary bishop. I met him first at the time of his episcopal consecration when he stayed at the scholasticate for several months. Later on more and more intimate relations established themselves between us, which my own elevation to the episcopate and my arrival in the West were to consecrate. He always acted toward me with confidence and respect which at the same time touched me, and proved his profound and sincere humility. You have clearly understood

*that it was his love of God that explained all his virtues; his zeal for souls; a truly supernatural devotion to the Indians; courage under trials; self-abnegation pushed to the limit, and a religious exactitude equalled only by that of a novice.*

*You are right in stressing the fact that this man who was so buried in the woods was not wanting in horizon, precisely because he was actuated by the highest and broadest motives and that he ever bore the needs of both Church and country in mind. I can see him again in Quebec on the day before the assembly of the Canadian Episcopate in October 1933, talking to me about his fears that Communism would soon invade the country, and destroy the faith of Canada, especially that of our beautiful province of Quebec. One might have thought him suffering personally all the dangers that he feared so much for souls. May not the care which he lavished upon the "Patriote" have proceeded from the same conviction?*

*It was the same with the Congregation, which he never ceased to love tenderly, and in spite of some most difficult happenings which arose later on, he ever looked upon it as a whole, and served its every interest. It was under this impulse that he undertook to secure the patronage of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus for all the missions of the world. His devotion toward her was very direct and simple like everything else that proceeded from him. He wrote to me about it again in a letter which I did not receive until after his death.*

*In bringing this beautiful apostolic figure, and the life story of a faithful Oblate bishop to the light of day, my dear Father, you are performing an act of justice, and a work of enlightenment and zeal, for there will be many souls who will warm themselves at the flame of his love. Your work will inspire vocations.*

*With this thought I assure you of my prayers and my blessing in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate.*

† J. M. Rodrigue, card. VILLENEUVE,  
Archbishop of Quebec.

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## PREFACE

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The request that I would write the biography of Bishop Charlebois was based upon the fact that I am a contemporary of the venerable prelate; and upon the confidence with which he honored me, particularly during the last years of his life, and the respectful friendship I had always borne him.

I cannot deny the weight of these reasons although they scarcely give me the necessary talents for the writing of an adequate biography. For Bishop Charlebois I could wish it to be more than adequate, I should like to write a life that would shed full light upon this beautiful personality at once so religious, missionary, and episcopal.

It is true that we both arrived upon the missions of North Western Canada at the same time, nearly fifty years ago. Since then we have always been working in the same vicariate in spite of the two successive divisions of territory. But Father Charlebois was stationed at the extreme North East, while I was at the extreme North West at a distance of 500 miles. That, considering the difficulties of communications, would not permit of frequent meetings. And though communications have become much easier between these missions in which Father Charlebois exercised his apostolic zeal, there are there still three missionaries who have been there ten, thirty, and forty years, whom I have never had the good fortune to meet. This may help toward a realization of the isolation which is among the greatest sufferings of the Northern missionary.

Thus it happened that my meetings with Father Charlebois had been purely accidental, and but of short duration, up to the time of his elevation to the episcopacy. But for all that they had sufficed to show me a very lovable co-worker whom I knew to be filled with devoted zeal for his Indians, and loved and esteemed by everyone who came into contact with him, one too, whom his superiors had implicit confidence in.

My more frequent intercourse with him after he became my bishop in 1910, permitted me more fully to appreciate the beauty of his rich character, and certain events enabled me to judge of the delicacy of his feelings from the very beginning.

I believe that very few people fully appreciated him in this matter. I who thought myself very well acquainted with him am forced to admit that the reading of his private papers, which I was obliged to consult, were a veritable revelation to me, showing me the source whence came the strength of will that enabled him to hide the extreme sensitiveness of his nature beneath the appearance of coldness, even of harshness. For this man who seemed so cold at first, and whom many thought unsympathetic, was in reality tender-hearted, and asked nothing better than to give himself to his friends and be united with them. What suffering this deeply hidden tenderness must have caused him! We gather from his retreat notes that from the days of his novitiate and scholasticate he worked tirelessly against this too natural leaning toward creatures in order that he might give himself unreservedly to God, and do his duty at all times at no matter what cost. Devotion to duty was the leading characteristic of Bishop Charlebois in his dual characters of missionary and bishop.

He thus expresses himself in his notes of the retreat preparatory to his Act of Oblation in 1884: "Give yourself entirely to God, you could do nothing better; but let this oblation be truly complete and sincere. Remember that in this you have engaged yourself to have no other model than Jesus. Now Jesus was poor, chaste, obedient, humble, charitable, and a lover of mortification. Therefore you must be the same; or at least make serious efforts to be so." It is safe to say that Bishop Charlebois constantly worked for the realization of this ideal during his whole life.

It was the realization of these ideals, although he knew nothing about these resolutions that excited the admiration of Bishop Grandin who ordained him, and in whose diocese the first years of his apostolate were spent. The holy bishop of St. Albert wrote to him on April 26, 1888, a few months after his arrival on the mission: "I congratulate you upon your good will to learn the language. Courage my dear Father: you give a good account of yourself; you will become an accomplished missionary in time. But seek only God in everything. Do not forget that you must love the Indians

if you wish to do them good, and that in order to love them you must love Him who has redeemed them at a great price."

These words of the saintly Bishop were a commentary upon Father Charlebois' own resolutions, an echo of them, so to speak. So one may say that during his whole life he applied himself to the practice of them and however painful the sacrifices demanded of him by the Divine Will, he was always submissive, seeking only God and the accomplishment of His will without ever seeking himself. One might say that he loved his Indians to folly as many examples of his missionary and episcopal life will show us, and one could scarcely believe that such love was founded upon the poor weak points of the said Indians. He must therefore have loved them, only because he loved Him Who has redeemed all men, including the poor Indians, at the price of His own Precious Blood.

It was indeed their souls that he loved and sought, and it was this love for their souls that made him so gentle, and so patient in all his dealings with these poor children of the forest, and enabled him to put up with their provoking, and often revolting defects. Following Bishop Grandin's advice, he loved them in Jesus, and for Jesus.

A year before his death he wrote to a young missionary, repeating probably without remembering their source, the counsels he had himself received from the old Bishop of St. Albert: "Your way of dealing with the Indians does not seem good to me, and if you continue in that way I can only predict that your ministry will fail. In ministering to souls, the way in which you will do them the least good is to rub them the wrong way. To do them good the priest must love his people whether they have defects or not. The priest must always show himself amiable and gentle, as well as firm, so that the people feeling themselves loved will run to meet the priest like children to their father."

It was his intense interior life which sustained the love of God, and it caused him to apply himself unintermittingly to the achievement of personal holiness which had always been his ambition from the days of his novitiate and scholasticate. We are forced to believe this from the retreat notes written during his formative years, and during the early years of his active missionary life. The notes fail us later on; but there is no doubt that he perseveringly continued his efforts.

In addition to the necessity of his own salvation, Bishop Charlebois was convinced that apostolic zeal would remain inoperative unless founded upon the holiness of the apostle, and thus he never ceased urging upon his missionaries the acquirement of personal holiness as indispensable to the efficacy of their zeal. He wrote to them from the early days of his episcopate: "Before anything, my dear Fathers and Brothers, let us turn our zeal upon ourselves. Let us labor with renewed ardor at our own sanctification. If troubles increase; let our holiness increase in proportion. Do we observe that the spirit of prayer has diminished among our people, let us pray more, and pray better. Does a lessening of faith manifest itself, let us live in a greater spirit of faith, and love of our perfection. Does the love of pleasures and enjoyments increase, let us love and practise mortification with more fervor. With such sentiments, and by such conduct we shall become strong and powerful and our words will have a salutary effect in the converting and saving of souls." (Circular No. 5.)

One ought not to be satisfied with a platonic love of perfection: "Let us not be satisfied with reading, and saying: that is true, that is very beautiful, etc. Let us rather say: I must try to acquire this interior life with a determined will, and as perfectly as possible since it is so important. If we thus set about it in earnest we shall soon observe marvellous results in our apostolate; sinners will be converted; the tepid will become good Christians, and the good will become fervent. Let us aim at this result; but rest assured that we shall never attain to it except by a truly interior life." (Circular No. 12.)

We know from our own knowledge that Bishop Charlebois never required or asked of his missionaries anything that he had not himself practised, these simple directions demonstrate the simplicity of his own interior life.

He kept up and nourished this life by a continual application to the practice of every Christian and religious virtue. First among these were the virtues commanded by the three vows of religion: poverty, chastity, and obedience.

We have but to read his will in order to see the perfection with which he practised poverty; not only as a simple religious, but even after his elevation to the episcopate, even after his death, for he sought to imitate in every way Him whom he had taken for his model from the very beginning of his religious life when

he wrote: "I will take Our Lord Jesus Christ for my model of poverty." (Retreat of 1883.)

The retreat notes written during his scholasticate will tell us of the precautions he used to keep intact the beautiful virtue of purity.

In his retreat notes and resolutions of 1883, he describes his program of life with respect to obedience. "I will be very prompt to do at once what I am told. I will endeavor to receive orders as from Christ Himself. I will always conform my will and judgment to the will and judgment of him who commands me, without trying to turn my own opinions to account." We are able to affirm that he always practised this resolution exactly before, and even after his elevation to the episcopate.

As regards the characteristic virtue of the Oblate, fraternal charity, the delicacy of his heart, and his natural inclination to be over attached to some, and to avoid others was an obstacle to the supernatural exercise of this virtue. He felt his weakness in this respect and the necessity of fighting vigorously against it from the early days of his religious life. We read in the notes of his retreat in 1883, the first year of his scholasticate: "Great charity for everybody, and above all for those whom I feel inclined to dislike." He comes back to this in each retreat, even the monthly retreats. "My patron will be St. Francis de Sales. I wish to be gentleness itself, like he was. When I am often disturbed, or asked for services to which I am not obliged, I ought always to render those services, and always to receive the importunate with sweetness and amiability." (Monthly Retreat, June 1885.)

All these notes show us the superhuman efforts that he must have made during the course of his life in order to become the good, charitable, and obliging man whom we all knew him to be, even though he appeared insensible.

We naturally see that these things could not have been put into constant practice without a profound humility and great mortification. And so we find that Bishop Charlebois constantly applied himself to acquire and practise these two virtues ever more and more perfectly for they are the foundation of all true sanctity. "I will oblige myself to suffer humiliations with joy. I will think of myself as the least of all my brethren. I will avoid speaking about myself." (Retreat of 1883.) "At table I will always have enough, and it will always be good enough; never a word about

food. The same for clothing. In consequence, I will always be satisfied with what is given to me." (Retreat of 1886.)

He does not confine himself to general rules, he goes into details and imposes upon himself practices in poverty, humility, and mortification which might seem trifling to souls who are not deeply interested in their own sanctification, but that the saints have always loved and considered indispensable.

All these things could not be kept up without the help of prayer. So Bishop Charlebois, like the venerated Bishop Grandin, became a man of prayer with an ardent devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and a tender confidence in the Blessed Virgin whom he always calls: "My good Mother". In his notes, he confided the success of his episcopate to her protection by taking: *Ad Jesum per Mariam*, for his device. And he secured the prosperity of his vicariate by dedicating it to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Bishop Charlebois thanked God unceasingly for having called him into the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He looked upon the grace of this vocation as the source of all the favors that he received later on. In addition, his love for his cherished religious family was always very lively and caused him to spend himself for the purpose of procuring its extension.

During the early days of his episcopate, when the Congregation was not able to furnish him with all the subjects that he needed for the evangelization of his vicariate, he set out to recruit new members in the Province of Quebec, and even in France. He thus secured many new members for his Congregation and some of them found their way into his vicariate; but many others remained in other places. In this case, as in the other, Bishop Charlebois congratulated himself, and thanked God for the good results of his recruiting campaign, because the Congregation always benefited, and God's work was being done.

Bishop Charlebois' plan was one of continual labor at God's work, regardless of every fatigue, and every disappointment, and this solely because it was his duty. And he ever accomplished his duty without speeches or idle discussions. All that was perfectly natural with him, and he could not always understand why others could not do as much. This sometimes made him appear unfeeling, a little exacting with his fellow-laborers' infirmities, and failings. My own personal experience leads me to affirm that if one had the frankness to show him the exact difficulties of a case in all



simplicity, no father could have shown himself more compassionate, nor so kind toward his children, as he was with his missionaries. He loved each one tenderly although this tenderness was concealed by the apparent severity of his natural disposition.

In this preface I have tried to sketch an outline, which is as free from defect and as complete as possible, of the career of Bishop Charlebois. I would like to bring out the beauty of this great man while recounting his life. Unfortunately I have not sufficient talent to do this as I should wish, even were it possible in a simple biography. However, I hope my readers will be able to form an idea of him for themselves in accordance with the elaborate notes in the following pages. Let us permit the deeds and gestures of our hero to speak for themselves, persuaded that it will be the best means of making him known.



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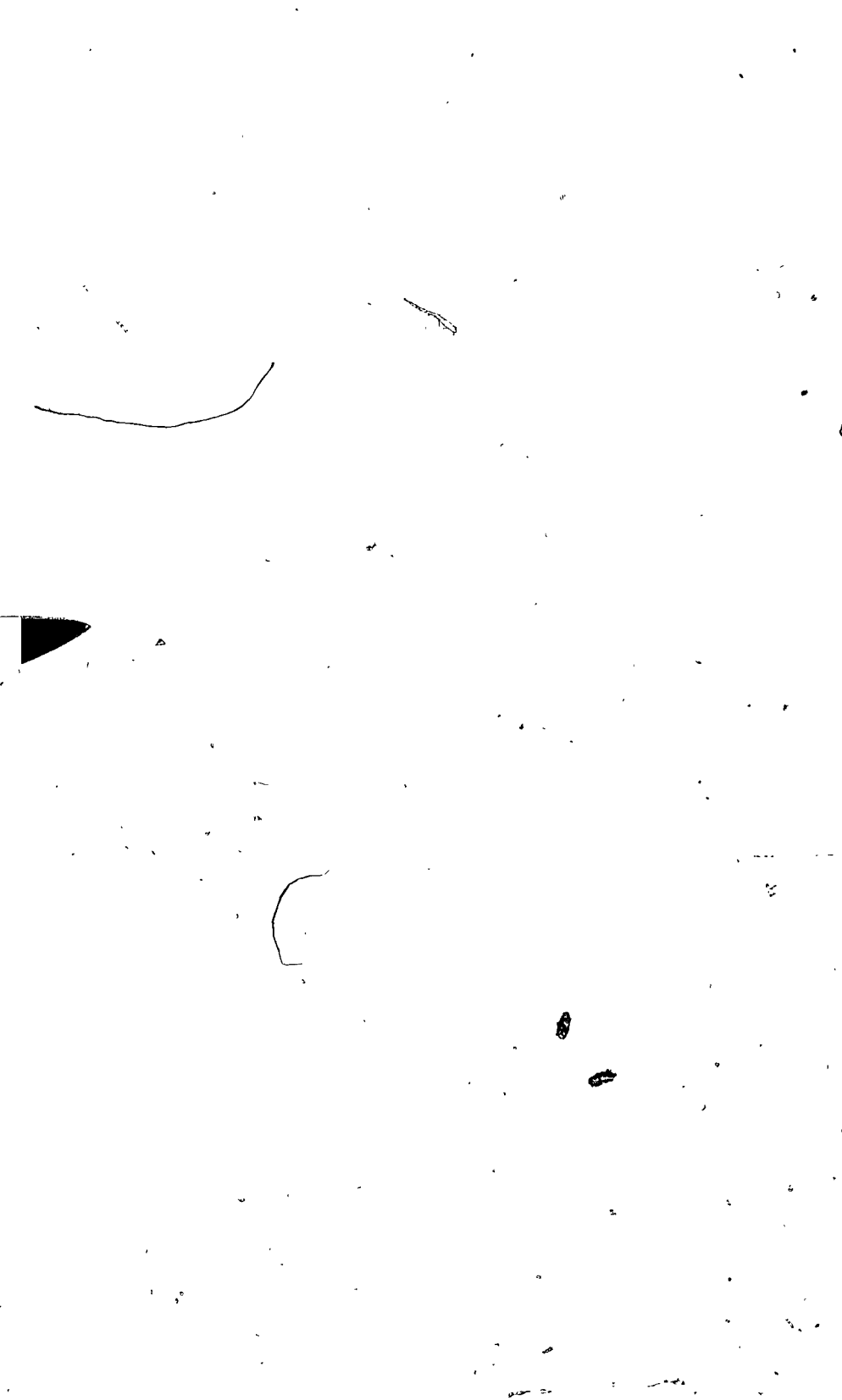
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## PART I

# The Young Man

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### CHAPTER I

#### Infancy and youth (1862-1882)

Bishop Charlebois was born February 17, 1862, at Oka, on the shore of beautiful Two Mountain Lake, in the Province of Quebec. His parents were Hyacinthe Charlebois, and Emerence Chartier, called Robert. He was baptized on the same day in the church of the Annunciation, receiving the names of William Ovide. He was the seventh of fourteen children. His parents were simple agriculturalists who worked a farm that did not belong to them. About the time of Ovide's birth they bought some land in the neighboring parish of St. Benedict; too soon they were to discover that the land was too poor to provide the support of their large family.

Meanwhile some colonists had settled in the counties of the Laurentians, to the north of St. Jerome, in Terrebonne County. Madame Charlebois' father, and two of her brothers who had been settled in St. Jerome for a long while, had gone to the new district, and they persuaded Hyacinthe Charlebois to sell his land and leave the shore of Two Mountain Lake so that he could join them in this territory then opened to receive new colonists.

He selected a plot about twenty-five miles north of St. Jerome, in the district which later became the parish of St. Margaret. At that time there was nothing but beautiful forests for many miles around. Some pioneers like himself were building, or, had just built quite primitive homes for themselves. His father-in-law, and some of his brothers-in-law were among these.

The Charlebois family moved their household belongings from Oka in March 1864, and went to their new home. Little Ovide was then two years old. The journey was long and must have been specially tiresome after leaving St. Jerome from whence the road was a mere trail among the trees and stumps of the forest. Fortunately Grandfather Chartier had already built a home for himself, so his son-in-law left his family there while he went to a spot about four miles distant to build a log house upon the land that he had chosen, beside a pretty little lake which was called Lake Charlebois, after himself. This first house was a mere barn. It was necessary to add some outhouses and later on to replace it entirely with a more convenient dwelling. But by August the log house was habitable and the Charlebois family left the home of Grandfather Chartier to go and live there.

Then it became necessary to clear some of the land and clean it up. Those first years were hard ones for the father of the family who had so many mouths to fill. His eldest daughter was then twelve years of age, and the eldest boy was not quite ten. But for all that everyone went to work according to his strength and ability. Nobody grumbled; no one was discouraged; because Christian traditions were strongly grounded in this family. According to inquiries made by Monsieur Henri Comte, the Charlebois were descended from a soldier of Captain de Crisafy's company. His name was Jean Charlebois, and he came originally from Bordeaux. He went to Canada in 1685 where he settled and married Martha Perrier in November 1686. The Christian traditions of old France which he brought over with him were kept up in the family from generation to generation, and no doubt they inculcated the practice of many virtues through the succeeding generations in order to have merited the beautiful flourishing of sacerdotal and religious vocations that unfolded in their younger descendants.

As a fact, out of the fourteen children of Hyacinthe Charlebois three died in infancy, five became priests, one of them a bishop, one daughter became a religious, and the five who remained in the world received so many religious and sacerdotal vocations for their children that it is almost impossible to enumerate them. Louis Veuillot says somewhere that these

graces are never met with in such abundance in a family unless drawn to it by the merit of great ancestral virtues.

According to the notes for which we are indebted to the kindness of his brother Father William Charlebois, and his sister Madame Lajeunesse, their father was entirely illiterate. But his lack of book learning was supplied for by his perfect knowledge and understanding of Christian teachings in faith and morals. No doubt these had been taught to him by word of mouth by his parents as was then the practice in the country parts of Canada where schools were rare. It had also been the practice of the countrysides in France at least in those parts where the Godless school had not worked its havoc.

Despite the poverty of their new home, Monsieur Charlebois always gave the first place to religious duties. Daily prayer in common was a rule in the family, as well as faithful attendance at Sunday Mass and Vespers. St. Margaret's was not yet a parish when they arrived there; and their nearest church, St. Adèle, was twelve miles away. Considering the distance and the bad state of the roads, it was impossible for them to go every Sunday, but they supplied for the Mass by the recitation of the rosary and singing of hymns. When the church of St. Margaret was built a few years afterward, a little village soon sprang up around it, and Monsieur Charlebois never missed Mass then, although his farm was five miles from the church, and in a very hilly country where the roads were nearly always bad. Sometimes he was compelled to make the trip on foot, and often fasting, for he approached the sacraments frequently.

His fidelity in the fulfilment of the essential duties of a Christian was certainly the most efficacious means of impressing the importance of those duties upon his children, and he joined to them other and secondary practices very useful in keeping up the Christian spirit of the family, practices that have been faithfully adhered to in the countrysides of France and Canada where the Christian spirit has truly ruled them, such were prayer before and after meals, the sign of the Cross before beginning work, the blessing of children, or a sign of the Cross made with the knife over a loaf of bread before cutting it, etc.

He united oral instructions with these object lessons; when necessary, admonitions, but more frequently good advice given

in the form of what are called Proverbs in the western country places of France. These are sentences which have been transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth, which express the most important moral truths in brief and concise terms. He often illustrated his counsels with typical anecdotes and picturesque comparisons calculated to impress them upon the memory. His relations toward his children were inclined to severity, but without ill humour, so that while fearing him they all greatly loved him.

But evidently the labor to which the needs of his large family compelled him would not permit him to undertake their education in every detail; that was the mother's share. The father always upheld her authority, as every intelligent head of a family should do unless he would spoil his children's education.

Madame Charlebois, also, had received a truly Christian education, and having been brought up in St. Jerome she had had the opportunity of learning to read and write. Her intelligence was as remarkable as her piety. Gentle in character, she was kind, affectionate, and of an equable and cheerful disposition, but this did not prevent her from being firm about her commands, nor from exacting from her children an unquestioning obedience, which she had the gift of obtaining ordinarily without having recourse to threats or punishments. All her children loved her tenderly, while they respected and esteemed her above all.

She was a good manager, and in spite of the slimness of her resources her children never wanted for necessities, neither as regards food or clothing. A good cook, she knew how to get the most out of the farm products in preparing the meals for her family, and like all the good Canadian women of that era she could spin and weave. She made all the garments of which each had need with her own hands, and as soon as her daughters grew old enough she made them help her and thus taught them how to become good housekeepers when their own turn should come.

But the work to which she applied herself with the greatest care was that of training all her children to become good Christians. Scarcely did they begin to lisp a few syllables than she made them pronounce the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.



Then she taught them to make the sign of the cross, and to say pious aspirations even before they could understand the significance of the words. As their intelligence developed she taught them the truths of faith, trying to come down to their level, so that they could know of the Creation, original sin, the Incarnation, the Redemption, everything; with the Commandments of God; and the duties of a Christian life. There being no school in the vicinity, she herself taught them the catechism, and aided by their father she also made them practice the duties of Christian life, prayers in common every evening, and in the morning nobody was permitted to come to the breakfast table if he had not made his morning prayer. On Sundays everyone, except the tiniest ones and one or two left in charge of them, walked the five miles that separated their farm from the church. Those who had already made their first Communion were often obliged to make the trip fasting, for they approached the Sacraments frequently. When that happened, they made their thanksgiving after the High Mass, and it would be toward one o'clock in the afternoon before they broke their fast. There were no Vespers at St. Margaret's in those days, but the family supplied for that at home, by the Way of the Cross, the Rosary, and the singing of hymns and pious reading by the mother of the family. It was only afterward that they were allowed to take innocent recreations.

It was in this atmosphere of piety and work that the little Ovide grew up. He seems to have been gifted with an excellent disposition from his earliest years. His sister Armandine (Madame Lajeunesse) said that even when he was quite a little baby he was never heard to cry or get out of temper as so often happens with little children. Though he was of a spirited character he was always calm and reasonable.

He developed physically in a surprising way and at five years of age he had already begun to make himself useful in small ways. The Charlebois who were living under pioneer conditions found the results of their fishing and hunting a great help. The little Ovide began very early to take a part with his brothers in these activities which were not mere pleasure parties for them. Thus he became an expert at handling a canoe, or a gun, or at hunting martin, beaver, musk-rat, hare or partridge, turtle or duck, and to catch excellent little trout

in the neighboring lakes at a very early age. In addition he developed strength rapidly and was soon able to take a part in more serious and fatiguing labors. "At twelve years of age, he could use a hatchet and saw as well as his elder brothers," his brother Father William tells us.

No doubt all that was arranged by Providence in order to fit him for the labors of his missionary life to which he could never have devoted himself with the self-mastery that he did, if he had been raised delicately.

His strength and skill made him neither proud nor vain; on the contrary, he was good and kind to everyone and tried to render all the services that he could. Submissive to his parents in everything, the least disobedience even if involuntary made him sad.

But though he liked to work, he also enjoyed playing and amusing himself at the proper time. But although he thoroughly relished a laugh or a joke, he detested those games in which some are victims and the rest executioners, perhaps more or less unconsciously so, but often very cruelly. He invariably sided with the weaker in such a case, against the stronger; for the victim against the aggressor. Father William Charlebois tells of an incident that illustrates this attitude of his. Newly arrived at the College of Assumption, Ovide passed by a room where several students were amusing themselves, and from whence came cries and lamentations. Entering quickly, he saw one of the youngest pupils tied to the stove. Some of the bigger ones were having fun out of tormenting him. Ovide indignantly rushed to the little victim and without taking time to untie his bonds, he broke them with a sudden jerk, and acted so decidedly that the mischievous ones thought it more prudent to beat a hasty retreat.

He was loved by all his brothers, and they all, even the eldest, respected him and ordinarily chose him for umpire in the little difficulties and discussions that could not fail to arise now and then in the midst of so large a family.

This esteem in which his sisters and brothers held him was shared by everyone who knew him, and especially by his parents who had the greatest confidence in him. So when Ovide was nineteen and about to finish his classical studies,

his father who was not by any means blind, nor given to indulging his children, said: "I have never had to scold that boy".

The long distance between the farm and the village made school attendance very difficult for the Charlebois children. The second girl, Albine, had spent two or three years in St. Benedict's boarding school where she made her grade studies fairly well. When she returned home at the age of fifteen she taught her younger brothers a little. But she married before long and then Ovide and William attended St. Margaret's village school. "We had to stay in the village", writes Father William, "because of the distance. During the first winter we lodged in the school house as care-takers. We had to keep the house warm, and bring in the wood, etc. Our parents brought us our provisions for the week every Sunday. We had a good deal to suffer from cold in that badly built hut which was without a foundation, and had no double windows, nor ceiling. We slept comfortably enough at night in our folding bed, but getting up in the morning took heroism. Ovide would be up at the first sound of the Angelus and hurried to light the fire. Afterward we went to the church to assist at the Mass which one of us served.

The following winter was not nearly so painful for we were hospitably entertained by Monsieur Charles Lajeunesse, the brother of our brother-in-law Eusèbe. We received our provisions from our parents there also, and helped out a little.

But if Ovide had little schooling he had learned his catechism exceedingly well. In those days it was not only necessary to know the catechism for admission to First Communion, it was also necessary to have reached the "canonical" age, which varied in different dioceses. In Montreal it was twelve, but the little Ovide was so pious, and he knew his catechism so well that the parish priest made an exception for him, and admitted him to Communion at the age of ten. He made his First Communion with his brother Alcide in 1872, and so piously that he continued in prayer and union with Jesus the whole day. Even in the afternoon when his brothers asked him to go walking with them, he excused himself, replying that having received Communion that morning he did not wish to distract himself by going along. Yet he loved to walk.

From that time he communicated at least once in the month. When he entered college he received every week which was the limit for frequent Communion at that time.

However, a great sorrow struck the Charlebois family in the death of the mother, the gentle Emerence, who succumbed to an attack of puerperal fever following the birth of her fourteenth child, in December 1874. What confusion did not the loss cause in her family in addition to their sorrow over the death of their beloved mother! Her two eldest daughters, Armandine, now Madame Lajeunesse, and Albine, now Madame L. Charette, had already been married for several years and each had several children of her own. They could not therefore come to the aid of the orphans. Madame Lajeunesse adopted little Marie-Ange, the baby whose birth had cost the life of her mother, and who herself lived only a few months.

Procule, at that time about eighteen, was a great help to his father with the farm work. Jean, sixteen, was studying at Assumption College, but there were still nine at home, whose ages varied from two to fifteen. The eldest of these was Alma, who was lame and could walk only with crutches as the result of an accident at the age of four years.

Alma faced the situation with courage in spite of her infirmity. Leaning upon her crutches she took an active part in directing the housekeeping, and caring for her younger brothers and sisters, aided, writes Father William, "by her brothers, and particularly by Ovide who was then thirteen." This compelled him to interrupt his attendance at the village school, but no doubt as a reward for his courage, God granted to Alma the grace of a cure. A few months after the death of her mother she found that she was able to walk without her crutches, although she still limped a little.

Did the boy Ovide dream from that time of becoming a priest? His piety, and his love for the church services make one suppose that he did, but the circumstances in which the family found itself, the possibility of his making his classical studies were so chimerical in appearance that he felt obliged to stifle the thought, and all his ambitions at that time seemed to have been to aid his father in the work of the farm, and become a successful farmer.

But when God has chosen a person for His service, unless the parents oppose His designs, He finds a way to place the chosen one where He wills him to be. It happened that God had chosen several members out of the poor and numerous family, and the one whom He selected to bring all these vocations to success was Jean, the fourth child of the Charlebois family.

Jean had plenty of talent, he was pious and wished to be a priest. The good parish priest of St. Margaret's, Father Louis Casaubon, had noticed him in his visits to the school and formed the idea of aiding him in the making of his studies. So he obtained the consent of Jean's parents, and then, in the fall of 1870, when he had just been named for a professorship at Assumption College, he became professor of elementary Latin to his protégé Jean. He even found a notable benefactress for him in the person of Madame Joseph Edouard Fari-bault, a devout widow who undertook to pay for the greater part of his course of studies.

Ovide's help around the house became less necessary after Alma's cure. His father who had noted his enthusiasm for work, and his good dispositions thought of sending him to take a two year's course in agriculture at Assumption College. Ovide sat to work with his usual enthusiasm and good will. He did so well that his brother Jean then nearing the end of his classical course, seeing the piety and diligence of his brother resolved to have him take a classical course also. The project seemed difficult of realization, "but", Father William tells us, "this Jean was very enterprising and full of honest strategems". So during recreation, and upon holidays, he began to teach his younger brother, and when the College reopened in 1876 Ovide was ready to start on his Latin elements. Madame Fari-bault paid a great part of his expenses during that year, and a friend of Jean's, Monsieur Alfred Archambault, the future Bishop of Joliette, provided his books and paper throughout his entire course.

However, Monsieur Charlebois being afraid that his daughter Alma might either marry or enter religion, which would have left the other children deserted, resolved to marry again. He married Mademoiselle Emely Lane in 1878. She was a good spinster who had formerly acted as housekeeper to two parish

priests named Toupin P.S.S. She never had any children of her own but she took all her new family to her big warm heart. She loved all her husband's children like a real mother, and made herself beloved of them, as well as of her grandchildren.

Still Alma did not marry until several years later, and in the meanwhile she continued to help in the work of the house and to perfect the education of her younger brothers and sisters in partnership with her step-mother.

The country around St. Margaret's was very poor as regards cultivation. It had yielded well for the first few years, but beneath a thin layer of humous there were only stones and tufa, so that the soil soon became exhausted and less and less productive. Jean had become a professor in the college while still a student in theology. On the advice of Monsieur Casaubon he now persuaded his father to sell his land at St. Margaret's, and come and settle in the village of Assumption.

Monsieur Charlebois moved there in the fall of 1878, shortly after his marriage. He was given the surveillance of the College farm, with the teaching of agriculture to the students. His earnings there were very small, but his wife, with Alma's help, opened a boarding house for twenty college students. This provided them with funds that enabled Ovide to board at home, thus reducing the expenses of his education considerably. In the same way they were enabled to send William to college, and later on Emmanuel and Charles as well. Thus was very satisfactorily solved the problem of their classical education.

Monsieur Charlebois continued his supervision of the farm for seven or eight years. Toward 1888 he opened a butcher's shop which soon began to prosper, and from then on his position was easy.

Ovide was not a brilliant student at Assumption College, he could not even have been described as "good" at composition, but he had an upright mind and sturdy common sense, and these, joined to serious and diligent work, enabled him to hold a place above the medium students in his class. All his masters were satisfied with his work while his piety charmed them, as the word of one of his professors attests. Ovide suffered a bad attack of typhoid fever and was brought to death's door. During that time his brother Jean was himself ill and confined

to his bed. One of the college priests went to visit Jean to let him know that his brother was very ill and that he had just administered the last sacraments to him. "Is he quite resigned?" inquired Jean. The answer came readily: "O perfectly! You see, he is always *Ovide*." But, if his teachers esteemed him, he on his side loved and respected them. He never permitted himself to make the least criticism of them. A strict observer of every rule, even of the smallest orders of the superiors, he never had any but excellent marks for conduct, and never experienced either scoldings nor punishments. It was only his brother Jean who so tenderly loved him, and wished him to make more rapid progress in his studies, who made him cry sometimes in the beginning of his course, because he showed himself very exacting over them. Here is a valuable testimony on his student life from Canon Auguste Picotte, his professor in Latin syntax: "In one word, *Ovide* was truly a model student in every way. He was very pious...; he was obedience personified and respectful toward his teachers; he loved study and had a great ambition to succeed in them. He was good and charitable toward his companions; neither had he any enemies." (Letter of Canon A. Picotte.)

During recreation time he entered into the games with all his heart. He was ever active, and the life of the party; but he did not like games that were too noisy or liable to cause quarrels and disputes. All his fellow students esteemed him, and he showed himself kind to everybody, but he was sought out by those who for one reason or another were more or less neglected by the other students, or the butts of those one finds in certain colleges who consider them as nit-wits, and subject them to every kind of insult and contempt. In a word he was always on the side of the oppressed against the oppressors, as we have seen already in the above incident.

His college life kept up and strengthened the pious habits that he had already formed at home. We have already mentioned that he communicated every week. Quite naturally he belonged to the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, and during his spare time he frequented the chapel for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, or to make the Way of the Cross.

During his vacations he renewed again in all their entirety the pious habits he had learned in his family. Far from trying

to absent himself like many students do, thinking to make themselves appear above the others, Ovide not only attended every exercise, but he was an example, even to the members of his own family which was so pious, by the gravity and recollection which he brought to them.

He was also the edification of the whole social circle among whom he spent those holidays. One of his cousins, on the maternal side of the family, Sister St. Eugénie, a religious of the Mercy Order writes about this: "I remember how my parents praised the grave and modest bearing, and the profound piety of this distinguished cousin. One was forced to indulge in admiration of his angelic countenance in the church where he was so absorbed in prayer as to be indifferent to all that was passing around."

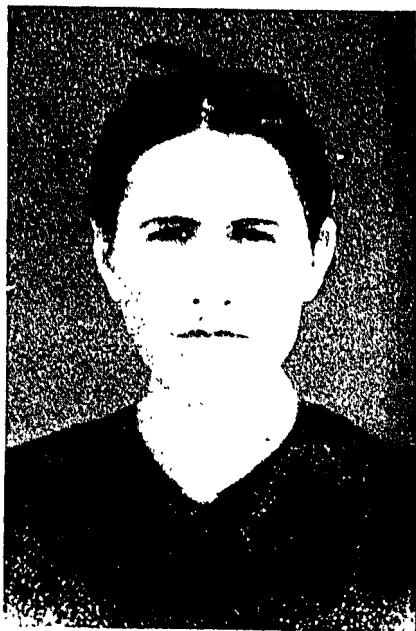
Another cousin, Sister St. Edwidge, of the Grey Nuns of Montreal, also wrote: "Ovide's piety was natural and communicative. There was a little chapel not far from his home at Assumption, dedicated to Our Lady of Good Succor. The family went there every day as a rule to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Circumstances had not given me a share in these beautiful things for I had always lived in the city where there is always so much noise, so my piety had not been cultivated like that of the admirable family which was an example to me in every way. I admired, but did not imitate them in these charming things. The religious-in-the-making that was young Ovide at that time, took me in hand, and I felt it very much, for on the following day I made one of the pious processions and watched one after another this blessed family making the Way of the Cross, in the devotional chapel...

"My stay in their midst was the germ of my vocation to religion. Was not the future apostle already exercising an apostolate on those around him? I was not fervent enough to attend vespers on Sunday; he was pained by that, not to say disedified. He spoke to me about it with his usual kindness and I wished to tease him a little in defending myself. I said to him: "if you will bring me a bunch of cherries every day I will go. His family had no garden so he went each day to his friends to beg the fruit which he brought to me. I was obliged to listen to his exhortation."





Mr. Hyacinthe Charlebois,  
father of Bishop Charlebois



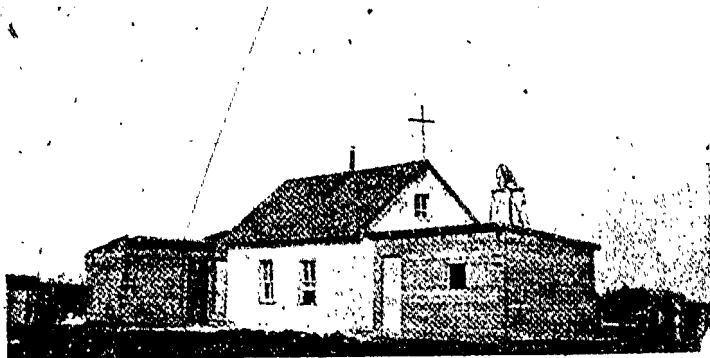
Mother of Bishop Charlebois  
(born Emérence Chartier).



Rev. Father O. Charlebois,  
recently ordained priest (1887).



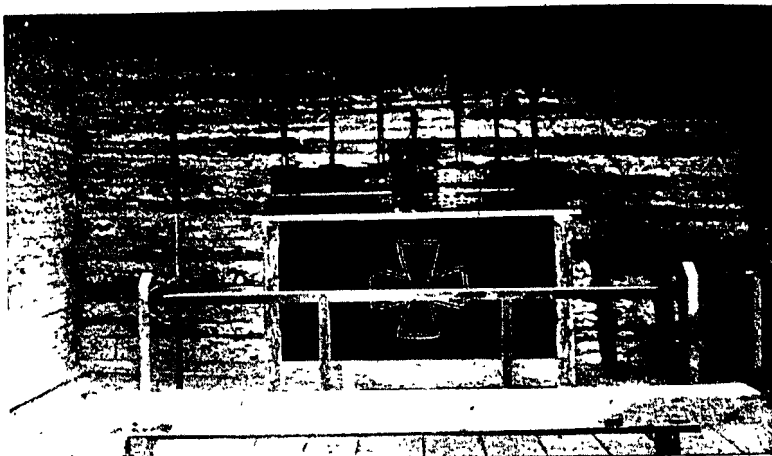
Rev. Father O. Charlebois, in his  
twelfth year in the missions (1899).



1 First cathedral  
2 First Bishop's House.  
(1910).

1

2



Altar of  
the first  
cathedral



Rev. Father Th. Labouré,  
Superior General of the Oblate Fathers  
of Mary Immaculate, reciting his  
breviary in front of the first cathedral.

But Ovide's piety was neither sour nor sad. He knew how to laugh and enjoy himself. Sister St. Edwidge tells us about several antics in which he was either the actor, or the kindly victim. Thus loved and esteemed by everybody, the young student Ovide came to his last year in college. That was in 1882, he was twenty years old, and the moment for choosing his career in life had arrived.

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## CHAPTER II

### Religious Life (1882-1887)

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In the pious family into which Ovide had been born they led a life that might have served for a model to more than one religious, and the inclinations of his own happy disposition helped the examples that he found there to effectiveness. But for all that it looked as though even from his tenderest years his ambitions had soared no higher than the aiding of his parents with complete devotedness while serving God as well as he could.

Later on, when circumstances enabled him to begin his course of classical studies he applied himself to be a model student, in order that still later he might become a good priest. Up to his last year in college these were apparently his whole ambitions, as they were probably those of his venerable father also. After having resigned himself to the having of him as helper and successor upon the farm, he consoled himself by imagining it as already charged with the support of one parish, or it may be that he saw himself retiring in his old age to the rectory of this beloved son.

Like every young man who comes to the end of his collegiate studies, Ovide had to think seriously about the now imminent future. Father William tells us that one of his fellow-students having lent him a little work of St. Alphonsus Liguori entitled: "Advice upon the Religious Life", Ovide read this admirable little work over and over again with eagerness. Then he decided to become a religious. The choice of a congregation was a comparatively simple matter. He had often heard conferences given to the students by the well known Fathers Lacombe, Lacasse, and Poitras, all of them Missionary Oblates, and former students of Assumption College. Father

Joseph Lefebvre, O.M.I., superior of the house in Montreal had given the annual retreat a year or two before, when several of Ovide's fellow-students had entered the Oblate novitiate. At that time the Oblates had a great reputation as missionaries in the North-West. It so happened that Ovide had dreamed of the missions from infancy. He had heard his father describe the beautiful ceremonies in the Indian mission at Oka; he had also read the annals of the Propagation of the Faith, and we have recently discovered that he had several times heard real missionaries, among them Bishop Grandin, talk about the missions. However, he hesitated, not because he feared the sacrifices that the life of a religious missionary might impose upon him, but because of the pain that his decision would cause to his parents who loved him so tenderly, and which affection was heartily returned. He said nothing therefore of his intentions to any member of his family except to his brother William who seems to have been his confidant.

He went to the Oblate novitiate at Lachine to make a retreat of three days at the beginning of his holidays in 1882, in order to study his vocation more intensely. There he met Brother Adelard Langevin, the future Archbishop of St. Boniface, who was to consecrate him in 1910. At that time he was a novice and had charge of the young retreatants. Bishop Charlebois tells us about this meeting in the discourse which he delivered on the occasion of his consecration. (See Part III. Chap. I.) He said that the good impression made by the young introducer confirmed him in his resolution to become an Oblate. The counsels and directions which he received from Father Boisramée, then master of novices, must have contributed even more firmness to his decision.

In spite of everything it cost him much to announce his decision to his father, and brothers and sisters for he dreaded making them suffer, and at this crisis an accident which nearly cost him his life seemed to him a warning sent by Providence in order to decide him upon completing his sacrifice. Father William tells us about this as follows:

"During the last holidays that Ovide spent at home before entering the novitiate, during the summer of 1882, abbé Jean Procule, Ovide and I were spending the day at the home of Alcide, who then lived at St. Margaret's, on the shore of the

Lake of Islands. We thought we would go for a swim, so we got into a boat intending to get away from the shore and swim back in. Jean, Alcide and I had already landed when Ovide plunged into the water. But instead of swimming, as he was very capable of doing, he sank to the bottom like a stone. Just at first we thought he was joking. But no, he rose to the surface struggling, and was just about to sink again when Procule who was still in the boat was able to reach him with an oar and save him. He never was able to tell us what prevented him from swimming as usual. He told me that being certain that he was drowning, he prepared himself for death and that he even had enough time to say to himself: "How much Papa will suffer!" I have always felt sure that this accident was permitted by Providence in order to strengthen his resolution to enter the novitiate."

His spirit of faith had shown him that separation from those near and dear to us does not depend upon ourselves, and that when God wills it, it will happen whether we wish it or not. The tragic death at which he had looked so closely would have afflicted his parents far more than his departure for the novitiate, and thus all his hesitations were overcome.

It was a terrible blow to his father when he told him of his determination, for Ovide was his favorite child of all his numerous family. His brothers and sisters knew it and none of them were jealous, so well did they understand that the preference was well merited. But as Monsieur Charlebois' motto had always been "Duty first!" he would not be found wanting in this principle on this sorrowful occasion. With a broken heart, but without either hesitation or reproach, he gave his consent. It was the same with his step-mother and Alma, although they wept bitterly. It seems as though some other members of the family had more difficulty in resigning themselves to the separation. As for Jean, he positively encouraged his young brother in his generous undertaking; and it is probable that William did the same, for he probably cherished the hope of going to join him from that time. This is what he says about the last days spent by Ovide with his family: "He went to make a last visit to St. Margaret's where he showed himself as gay and obliging as ever. Then he made his discreet farewells to the many relatives so tenderly loved, and

left our beloved mountains for ever. From there he went to his father's home at Assumption to make his final preparations. Finally, with a swelling heart but without losing his habitual serenity, he left us, for the Oblate novitiate about August 11. I have heard from Father Boisramée, master of novices, that he was an exemplary novice, esteemed and loved by everybody. When he went away he left me St. Ligouri's little book. The reading of this opuscle, and the edifying letters he wrote to me did their work so well that I entered the novitiate myself in the following year."

Thus Ovide began the apostolate which was destined to decide the course of so many religious vocations for Sisters and Missionaries, in his own family and among his friends, from the very threshold of his religious life.

We have no further details concerning his life in the novitiate, but such as we know him, there also he must have applied himself to do well what he found to do, in other words to renounce himself in order to give himself entirely to God. The novitiate must have been a continual retreat for a soul like his, and he certainly applied himself to acquire and perfect all the virtues which go to the making of a good religious and a good missionary during its course.

We have just discovered a small sheet of paper that had been lost among many others, it contains his resolutions taken after a retreat in 1877, that was during his college days and he was then only fifteen years old. These notes should have found a place in the former chapter but as they have come to hand late we thought it might be permissible to insert them here, especially as they are very fit for a novice. Here they are: "I have during this retreat come to the conviction that in order to advance in personal sanctification, and work effectually for the salvation of others, I must live an interior life, a life of union with the Sacred Heart and His Blessed Mother. To this end I will make renewed efforts to be attentive at my prayers, to speak familiarly with Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. 2. During the day I will think oftener of God and show Him my love by frequent aspirations. 3. After the example of St. Teresa, I will consider my heart as a little oratory where Our Lord, the Holy Ghost, and the Blessed Virgin dwell. I will frequently speak with them, above all I will consult them in



my difficulties. 4. Each morning, and several times during the day I will offer all my actions to the Sacred Heart through Mary Immaculate. 5. I will practise submission to the will of God with more fidelity. A watchword to be repeated as often as possible: "All for the Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary." This watchword which became his episcopal motto later on: "*Ad Jesum per Mariam*", "To Jesus through Mary", had been his from the age of fifteen, and one may feel certain that he had always been faithful.

The virtue which he specially proposed to acquire was humility, and that at an age when one is so much inclined to self-love and presumption: "above all," he wrote, "in my thoughts and in my intercourse with my companions." To what heights of virtue and holiness must not this soul have risen during his novitiate, who from infancy had been capable of such holy thoughts, and of making such practical and generous resolutions.

He made his temporary vows at the end of his novitiate, August 15, 1883. At that time the temporary vows were for a year only. Then he went to the scholasticate at Ottawa without visiting his family. "Therein", says Father William, "without suspecting it himself, he was a real model of a good religious, perfect in regularity, charity, gentleness and unbounded devotion, with great application to his studies, and an enlightened piety. His superior, Father Joseph Mangin, soon classed him among his chosen subjects. He laid upon him the most unpleasant charges, made him linen-man, holiday-cook, barber, and gave him the hardest manual work. His fellow scholastics always had a more than ordinary esteem for him. Everyone knows that the charges usually given him to fulfil ordinarily subject one to criticism; nevertheless I never heard the least unfavorable remark concerning him."

But this regularity, this constant graciousness, this absolute submission to the rule, and to the superiors is not reached without a struggle, nor without an intense interior life. Of this we have proof in his notes and retreat resolutions, notes that we do not unfortunately completely possess. But those we have, will suffice to show with what earnestness and application Brother Charlebois worked to acquire the virtues that go to the

making of a good priest, a good religious, and a good missionary. With what severity he judged his least faults and failings with what rigour he repressed every unruly tendency of nature.

His notes show us the foundation of his piety resting upon devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Virgin. All his resolutions were confided to the keeping of the Sacred Heart through the intervention of Mary. And besides that, with what diligence, with what ingenious means he used to keep himself in the presence of God and fix his attention at prayer!

In the Preface we find several citations from those precious notes. Did the limits of this brief biography permit, we should be compelled to cite them all. Since that is impossible we will at least glean a few of his resolutions made at the end of his retreat in 1886, the last one of his scholasticate.

Following paragraphs relating to various practices of devotion, of the method of assisting at Mass etc., we find the following: "7. During recreation, and whenever I am with the Brothers, I will think of myself as being their servant, consequently I will serve them with enthusiasm and pleasure. I will see only the good in all that they do; I will not prefer one to another; I will bear with their faults silently and try not to cause them any kind of suffering; I will listen to their reproofs of hurtful words in silence: I will never make remarks about them, at least not so as to hurt their feelings; I will never push a discussion too far, above all I will avoid bitterness and anger. Before each recreation I will ask the Blessed Virgin and my Guardian Angel to help me to pass it well. 8. During class I will avoid laughing in a way to hurt my brothers when they make a mistake. 9. Great kindness in the exercise of my charge. I will never give an express order, but say "If you please, or will you? I will always receive them cordially and easily. Never, oh never, harsh replies and hard reproofs. 10. Great cordiality in rendering service to my brothers (Attention on this head; I am often wanting in this). 11. No jealousy and ambition (Threefold attention here.); I am too miserable and too contemptible to try to glory in that way. However I am very much inclined to that." The following resolutions concern the practice of mortification in food and clothes and have already been cited in the Preface.

These are but the reproduction in a more exact form of other resolutions made during earlier retreats upon which Brother Ovide examined himself seriously in every subsequent retreat whether general or monthly. The few notes left to us of his Cumberland retreats show him to us as ever faithful to the resolutions of his scholasticate. The care he took to preserve these papers while asking that they be burned after his death, proves that he frequently re-read them, probably during each of his subsequent retreats.

In one of these notes we observed that he proposed to write as few letters as possible. He never succeeded in doing that, for he was always a great correspondent during his whole life; we think but few men have had so large a correspondence. But the second part of the same resolution which was never to write a letter without seeking to further the spiritual advantage of the person addressed, was constantly adhered to, at least when it was not a question of purely business letters.

His tender attachment to the members of his own family had not been broken by his entrance into religion. On the contrary, he loved them more than ever, for to the natural affection he felt for them he added a spiritual love which became more and more intense with time.

And thus the few letters belonging to this period of his life that we have been able to find show us his constant interest in what was happening at Assumption and St. Margaret's. But whether these events were happy or sorrowful he sought always to show them from the point of view of faith and submission to the will of God. One already sees in his counsels the prudence of the future director of souls. Thus, toward 1885 when the conduct of a member of the family was causing uneasiness and grief to some of them, he wrote: "I see that without a special assistance from Heaven you could not have triumphed and gained the victory in this painful combat. That is why I think the best means of helping you is by prayer, and I pray a great deal for you. Actually that is just what I am doing. I know that we have been praying about this for a long while, but there is no reason for discouragement because we have not yet succeeded. St. Monica prayed hard for twenty years before she obtained the conversion of her son. We must therefore arm ourselves with fresh courage and redouble our fervor. Who

knows if we are not just at the point of gaining this important grace?

"Above all let us call upon the Blessed Virgin; she is all powerful and she never refuses to hear a prayer that is full of confidence and humility. Yes, let us go to Mary with confidence, and I assure you that we shall succeed in our undertaking. Let us place him we wish to convert under the mantle of this good Mother, and trust her to work out his conversion herself; to protect him against the enemies who wish to destroy him; and to lavish upon him the graces necessary to overcome his evil inclinations, and to return to better dispositions.

"There is one thing more, let us do everything possible to gain his affection, make efforts to please him, show him a great kindness, show him his weaknesses gently and moderately, suggest to him tactfully little practices of devotion toward the Blessed Virgin, and try to inspire him with respect for the priest. I believe that this way of sweetness and charity will succeed better than harshness."

One recognizes here the language of an experienced director, one well used in binding up the wounds of hurt souls, and in bringing them back to the straight and narrow path from which they had strayed. Did one not know it already, one would never think of the writer as a young man of twenty-three. Let us add that his counsels which were carefully followed produced the required effect in a little while.

The vocations of his brothers and sisters, of his nephews and nieces interested him more than anything else regarding his family. Jean had been the first promoter of vocations in the family, as we have already seen, but his premature death in 1885 caused a deep sorrow to the tender heart of Ovide to whom this brother had become a very dear friend, after having been a vigilant master. It seemed that Jean in leaving this world had bequeathed the work of arousing and encouraging vocations to the religious and sacerdotal life in the family to his brother.

Father William has already told us that it was Ovide who attracted him to the Oblate Congregation. A few years afterward he drew his brother Charles to the Congregation, and then his nephews Alexander, Arthur, and Martin Lajeunesse. He had scarcely begun work on the mission when he persuaded

two other nephews, the Fathers Pigeon, to become missionaries also. He won a few more after his own elevation to the episcopate. But we must not anticipate, we speak here only of what happened, or at least began to happen during the years when he was still a student.

His brother Emmanuel had remained in the ranks of the secular clergy, but from the time Ovide began a purely spiritual correspondence with him, each urged the other toward the perfection of his state. When Ovide set out for the missions, Emmanuel begged him to begin writing his little journal: "The Echo of Cumberland", which furnishes so many valuable details concerning the first missionary years of Father Charlebois. He continued to be his chief correspondent until his death in 1894, after only two years of priesthood. ~~It was a~~ death that the Cumberland solitary felt keenly.

We have no details concerning the influence that Ovide possibly had upon his youngest sister's vocation. Marie-Louise died among the Montreal Grey Nuns in 1892. Certainly his influence with her must have been considerable from the evidence of the letter she wrote to him from her death-bed. In that letter we read as follows: "Dear Brother, I feel that my hour will come soon. I shall die without being able to utter a last farewell. That thought gives me pain, but I am happy to have this one more sacrifice to offer to our Lord. What else is there for me to do now except to resign myself and make the sacrifice. I find ample material for these two things in your absence. How could it be otherwise? How could I not regret the absence of a beloved brother, of such a brother as you? If I have the happiness to die as a religious, to whom, after God, do I owe it if not to you, my good brother? I am not afraid to say that I attribute my vocation to your good prayers and wise counsels."

Another Marie-Louise, the daughter of his sister Armandine and Eusèbe Lajeunesse, also felt the call of a vocation to religion. Her want of education made it difficult for her to obtain admission into a congregation. Her uncle Ovide, then still a student intervened with his brother-in-law to consent to the following of her vocation by his daughter, and to make

the sacrifices necessary to provide her with a suitable education. He gained his cause in the end, but God was satisfied with the good will of the parents, and of the young girl whom He took to His heavenly home before she entered the convent. While she was studying with the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame at the Assumption convent, in order to prepare herself to enter religion, she was attacked by typhoid fever. She was moved to the home of her parents in St. Margaret's where she died in June of 1888.

It seems that Monsieur Eusèbe had shown a little reluctance in consenting to give his first child to God when He asked for her. God took His revenge mercifully by calling six others, three of them girls who entered religion, and the three sons already mentioned, who became Oblates, one of them a bishop. It is needless to remark that uncle Ovide was no stranger to the blossoming and fruition of all these vocations, and of a multitude of others also.

The end of Brother Ovide's scholasticate was at hand. A letter which he dated from Cumberland, says that he had wished to be sent to the Indian missions, and Father William tells us that he had wanted that work even before his entrance into religion, and that he had not manifested this desire to his superiors through prudence, and abandonment to the will of God. God who had inspired him with this ambition procured its realization.

At the General Chapter of 1887 Bishop Grandin asked the Superior General for some Oblate subjects. He was given Brother Ovide Charlebois, then finishing his studies in Ottawa. Had he asked for this subject in particular? We do not know, but it seems that he already knew something of him for in that June while passing through the novitiate at St. Gerlach, Holland, the holy bishop joyfully told us that he had obtained a good subject who awaited him at the Ottawa scholasticate, where he would be ordained in a short time. But he did not yet know whether this obedience would be acceptable to the person interested, and that is why, having already embarked upon "La Gascogne" for his return to America, he wrote to him, on June 23 while still on board; "Our Reverend Superior General told me some news, good for me, and which I hope will be equally good for my diocese. It is that God has chosen

you through his intermediary, to come and share our labors. I believe that you love God enough to find this good news, also. Nevertheless I must admit that if you listen to flesh and blood you may think it bad. But you did not embrace the religious life for fun, and God shows you that He loves and has confidence in you since He confides a mission of devotedness to you. Courage, dear Brother, be entirely a man of God; give yourself to Him very specially to be used for His glory. Note that I say to be "used", not to be "killed". It is essential to live a long while in as far as that depends upon ourselves, and to utilize for God and the salvation of souls whatever time God may give to you."

What we know of Brother Ovide tells us surely that he did not consider this bad news, and his life as we study it in the following pages will prove that he both understood, and knew how to put into action the counsels and exhortations of the venerable Bishop of St. Albert.

In the letter from which we have cited the foregoing extract, Bishop Grandin says that he would be happy to ordain the new missionary himself but that he would probably have to renounce this pleasure because the interests of his mission would oblige him to spend some time in the United States before returning to Canada. Whether he shortened his trip or delayed the ordination, it was he himself who conferred the priesthood upon the one who was to render such important services to the Missions of the North West, on July 17, 1887.

"After his ordination", Father William tells us, "he went at once to spend a few days with his family. He divided this time between the two parishes of Assumption and St. Margaret's.

"At Assumption he saw his well beloved father and was deeply moved. He also saw his good step-mother, to whom he gave the sweet name Mother, his sister Alma whom he had always called his "Sister-Mother" because she had taken his dead mother's place beside him, his brothers Emmanuel and Charles, his young sister Marie-Louise, his great benefactress, Madame Faribault, and a few friends of the Family. The good pastor invited him to sing the Sunday Mass. He received a most friendly welcome at the college, his *alma mater* which he always loved till his dying day. He had the consolation

several times of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice in his beloved chapel of Notre Dame de Bon Secours where as a student he had so often assisted at Mass, and prayed with fervor.

"Accompanied by his father and sister Alma, he went to St. Margaret's where a good number of his relatives still lived, among whom was his grandmother Chartier, his two sisters Armandine (Madame Lajeunesse) and Albine (Madame Charette), as well as several uncles, aunts and others. He sang Mass in the church of his first communion. Father Gilbert Moreau, the pastor and a friend of the family, preached a most moving sermon. When Father Ovide came out of the church it was a touching sight to see the good people who had known him as a child, gathering about him to renew old acquaintances and recall memories of the past.

"He went with his relations who were present there to the cemetery, where he prayed at the grave of his lamented mother, and at the tomb of his venerable maternal grandfather, Dominic Chartier.

"On his return to Assumption Father Ovide had to think about farewells. At that period those who went to the Western Missions had no hope of returning. Their farewells were everlasting. As on the occasion of his departure for the novitiate, Ovide and his father showed themselves heroically courageous. God alone knew the greatness of their sacrifice.

"After that Father Ovide returned to the scholasticate at Ottawa, and there also the farewells were affecting."



## **PART II :**

# **The Missionary**

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### **CHAPTER I**

#### **From Ottawa to Lake Pelican (1887)**

After passing those few days with his family, Father Ovide Charlebois left for the Missions of St. Albert, Bishop Grandin's diocese, situated in what was then called the North Western Territory and took in all the land which now forms the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. But as he was destined for the Missions in the North East of the diocese, instead of sending him by St. Albert, Bishop Grandin ordered him to go at once to Lake Pelican by way of Lake Winnipeg, the Saskatchewan River as far as Cumberland, where he was to meet Father Bonald, the missionary in charge of those missions.

He went to Winnipeg from Ottawa by the Canadian Pacific Railways. On August 22 he boarded the little steamer, "La Princesse", on Lake Winnipeg. He wrote to his brother William, at that time a scholastic in Ottawa, from that point. "My journey from Ottawa to Winnipeg had no notable incident. After passing several days with our Fathers of St. Boniface and Winnipeg, I took the train for Selkirk where I boarded the boat upon which I am at present. We have descended the Rouge River from Selkirk to Lake Winnipeg which we shall cross from south to north in order to reach a fort named Grand Rapids.

"What can I tell you about Lake Winnipeg? It has only one drawback, its waters are turbid. For the rest it is very beautiful; its islands and banks are magnificent. Its size is

impressive: it is 250 miles long and 55 miles wide." (*Petites Annales O.M.I.*, 1891.)

"We were four days in crossing Lake Winnipeg, the boat pulled up at Grand Rapids on August 25. There", wrote Father Charlebois, "I was well received by the clerk of the Hudson Bay Company, who, although a Protestant, was very courteous toward me."

He wrote to his father on August 28: "I should leave here for Cumberland tomorrow, but I have not found suitable guides for such a journey. It was a happy delay for it happened that a barge arrived which will carry me without cost or danger. See how Providence cares for His missionaries." He went on to describe the country a little: "The Saskatchewan empties itself into Lake Winnipeg by way of a five mile long rapids; hence called Grand Rapids. The river is sixty rods wide at this point, and its waters are as turbid as those of Lake Winnipeg. The soil of the surrounding country has little value." He goes on to tell about a few Catholic families that he has found there, among whom he has tried to exercise his apostolic ministry. "I like the Indians very much", he continues, "and I am glad to be among them. You must have no anxiety for me; I am in God's hands, and those of the Blessed Virgin; consequently I am in no danger and I am happy and contented, which does not prevent me from thinking about you often, and about all those who are dear to me." (*Petites Annales*, Ibid.)

The boat they called a barge in that country was a small craft with a keel, and a capacity of five or six tons, used by the Hudson Bay Company to carry their freight to its northern posts. The barge upon which Father Charlebois sailed left Grand Rapids on September 2, and reached Le Pas during the night of the 7th. She had therefore traveled over 150 miles in five days, which was almost a record for a small boat propelled only by oars and sails, against the strong current of the Saskatchewan. The young missionary who then disembarked upon this well nigh deserted shore certainly had no idea that twenty-four years later he would return to that place to establish the seat of a new Vicariate Apostolic.



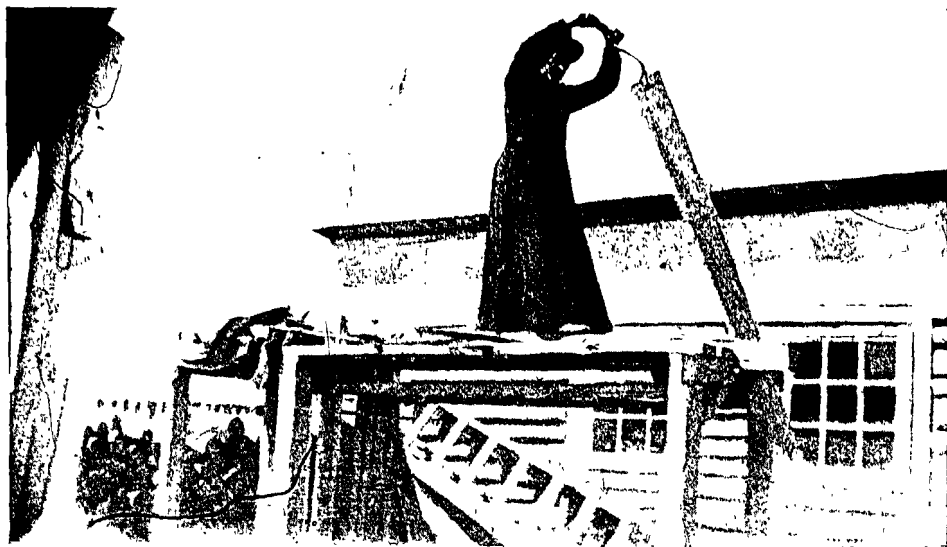
What a fine prey!  
(1911)



Suffer the little  
children to come  
unto me



"The poor are  
evangelized"



Father Joseph Egenolf, O.M.I.,  
working with the long saw,  
hard work, but Father Egenolf's labor



During his last pastoral tour,  
Father Charlebois meets a pagan  
at the foot of the lake.

Le Pas was not even a village in 1887. Here is the description of it that Bishop Charlebois gives us himself in the discourse which he delivered in 1922 at the dedication of his cathedral. The mission then consisted of one little chapel ten feet square, which served also as a bed-room, reception-room, and refectory. It was situated at the other end of the bridge which is now there, and quite close to the little cemetery which can still be seen. From this side of the river where the present city stands, one could see the house of the clerk of the Hudson Bay Company, and also that of the Protestant minister with his log church falling into ruins. That was all. The Indian population was mostly, as it is today, upon the other bank of the river. Among the white people were the clerk of the Hudson Bay Company, the Minister, and the Agent for the Indians who lived on the shore of the Lake which now bears his name, Lake Reader.

"I disembarked at Le Pas for the first time in front of the present house of the Hudson Bay Company. It was in the middle of the night, a night of the darkest kind. I had come from Montreal via Lake Winnipeg and from Grand Rapids in a government barge, staffed by seven Indians who neither understood me, nor could be understood by me. I landed timidly and anxiously. Where could I go in such darkness? I knew no one.

"But God had foreseen my difficulty and knew perfectly well how to help me out of it. The Company's clerk aroused by the sound of oars, came down to the river's bank. He was one of those fine Englishmen who were formerly so numerous in the Honorable Company who willingly showed themselves courteous and obliging to the Catholic Missionaries. He shook my hand and hastened to say: "Will you kindly wait here for a moment". He returned very soon bringing another gentleman with him who saluted me saying: "How do you do, Father?" I felt that those words were the friendly greeting of one of our own". (Discourse of Bishop Charlebois.)

The new friend was actually a half-breed Canadian. He lodged Bishop Charlebois and told him that his superior, Father Bonald, had arrived there that very day, and would be found on the other side of the river. "It was scarcely daybreak", continued Bishop Charlebois, "when I crossed the river and

threw myself into the arms of Father Bonald. I had found again a father, a superior, and a friend; my anxieties of the day before had completely disappeared." (Ibid.)

In order to understand the full extent of the young missionary's joy we must remember that he had just completed a trip, of five long days through an unknown country, among people who could not understand him, and whose language he did not know. In order to appreciate how painful that was, one must have experienced it.

The joy of the newly arrived missionary was the keener because he had been far from expecting to meet Father Bonald, there, no more than this one had expected the arrival of the young priest. Their meeting was entirely providential.

As it happened to be Sunday, the two priests resolved to have solemn Mass. Father Charlebois sang the Mass and Father Bonald was chorister and preached the sermon — in Cree — "Our people were astonished at this unusual solemnity".

The young missionary embarked the following day in a birch bark canoe with Father Bonald and two Indian guides to continue the trip up the Saskatchewan. Arrived at Cumberland he wrote to his former master of novices, Father Boisramée. "It took us not less than two days to reach Cumberland. This mission is rather more important than the two former ones, Le Pas and Grand Rapids, it contains about twenty Catholic families. We have a comparatively good house divided into two parts one of which serves as a chapel, and the other as a residence. We have two fine bells which make the Indians smile every time they ring." (*Petites Annales*, 1891.)

The young missionary should have gone to Lake Pelican where Father Bonald resided, for he was to study the Cree language under him. But the people of Cumberland were so earnest in their insistence that one of the Fathers remain with them, that Father Bonald decided to leave his young companion with them for a little while. The little while lasted for three months which no doubt seemed very long to the new comer.

He wrote to Father Boisramée a few days after Father Bonald's departure: "I am here alone in my little house with no other companion but our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He knows how to console, strengthen, guide, and make me

happy. I spend my time studying Cree, reviewing my theology and preparing instructions. I have also to do my cooking, sweep the floor etc. I sing Mass on Sundays, filling the places of priest and chorister. I might add that of server also, for I have no other server but a nine-year-old boy who is rather a hindrance than a help. I preach in French during the Mass, for several of my Catholics understand the language. During the afternoon we recite the rosary, sing hymns, and have an instruction which is followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. My chapel is filled by the faithful and very often Protestants come also, because they find our ceremonies so much more beautiful than those of their own ministers.

"My Indians show me a great deal of affection. They are very kind to me. If they happen to kill some game, or to get hold of something "extra" they never fail to bring me a part. Many of them come to see me with the idea of entertaining me." (*Petites Annales*, 1891.)

The time must have seemed very long to the young missionary in spite of the entertainment furnished by the visits of his Indians, and the "extras" in food that they brought to him, and life must have been very hard to one who did not understand the language of the greater part of his people and who was, moreover, surrounded by a population of which the majority were Protestants. We may add that the coarse food consisted mainly of fish, dried or smoked meat, and from time to time a bit of pancake made of unleavened dough cooked, more or less, in front of the fire. Bread, properly so called, was unknown, as were salt, sugar, and coffee. The ordinary finishing touch was only tea without sugar, and toasted bacon. This bacon which came from Chicago had generally reached quite a respectable age by the time it appeared on the mission. It was nothing better than smoked fat pork preserved in salt. The "extras" provided by the Indians were pieces of elk meat, or a few hares or partridges which had to be cooked without salt or seasoning.

An epidemic of diptheria that broke out at that time among the inhabitants of Cumberland added to his sufferings and caused him great distress. "Nearly all the children are dead", he writes. "The sight that meets my eyes when I visit the huts is most heart rending. I saw four, five or six people lying upon

the ground rolled up in miserable blankets, and so close to one another that I had to watch, so as not to tread upon anybody's arm or leg. I would often find a little corpse among the sick, and the poor mother exhausted by fatigue and broken by sorrow. Poor people! I visited them as often as I could, but the greater number of them could understand neither French nor English, so I could not console them with words, but they have such confidence in the priest that my visit was a great comfort to them." (*Petites Annales*, 1891.)

It was a real heartbreak for the devoted young missionary to see his people suffering and dying thus without being able to console and strengthen them as he wished. In order to measure that sorrow of a missionary, particularly a young one, who, so to speak, has never seen death, in assisting at the agony of his children powerless to speak the words of comfort with which his heart is filled, one must have experienced this want of understanding which prevents one from addressing to them the words of comfort in their own language.

As though nothing were to be wanting to his difficulties during these painful months of his initiation into the ministry of the missions, Father Charlebois fell ill himself, and rather seriously, although he says only: "I also had my little trial", he writes. "A heavy cold accompanied by a pain in the right lung annoyed me for several days. One night among others, I thought that I was going to die. The pain in my chest was so severe that I found it extremely difficult to breathe. You can easily imagine the things that passed through my head. I was alone, far from any habitation. Above all I was far from my brother, Father Bonald, 130 miles away! The pain died down little by little, and today I am completely well again. I am happy and contented in my new station of life. The Indian Missions have been the object of my desires for a long while, and I thank God for having sent me to them through the agency of my superiors." (*Petites Annales*, 1891.)

But all this did not stop nature from standing up for its rights at frequent intervals, nor the young missionary from weeping often amid his trials and his solitude in spite of his abandonment to the will of God, and his supernatural spirit. He confesses as much himself in his letters to his sister, Marie-Louise Lajeunesse, and to Bishop Grandin. The last named



replied, on April 26, 1888: "Poor Father, who would have thought of you being left alone so long? I should be angry with myself if it were my fault. So you have sometimes been betrayed into tears in your solitude? Poor Father! I had the same weakness while reading your letter, and in replying. But it is evident that God knew you to be equal to the trial, otherwise He would not have exposed you to it. It is over now; I am glad of it, and I feel sure that God is so, too."

Thus in loneliness and trials he passed the months of October and November. During the early days of December they sent from Le Pas to fetch the missionary to baptize a sick child. It meant a journey of forty-five miles which he made in a dog train. "During this trip", he writes, "I made use of a dog train for the first time. It is our only winter carriage."

This famous carriage was composed of two thin planks of birch, about six or seven inches wide and twelve feet long, sharply turned up in front. These planks are united by narrow bars fixed to the upper sides of the planks with little thongs of untanned leather called babiches, in such a way that the babiche does not pass beyond the surface of the planks underneath the train. To the outside edge of each plank they fix rings ordinarily made of rope through which is slipped the strap, which keeps the load upon the train, whether the load be alive or not. The carriage thus organized, they next spread out a covering in which they arrange the person or things which make up the freight, the covering is closed and tied up with string. Next they harness four or five dogs to the front: the conductor cracks his whip and cries: "March!", the dogs set out at a trot and the freight is tossed about at every hole in the road, when he is not turned upside down with his face in the snow. It is easily seen that this is both an easy and pleasant means of locomotion. As for the conductor, he must run behind his dogs, or at the most, when the road is very good he can stand behind upon the back of the train. Sometimes he even has to take a stick and push from behind to help the dogs when the freight is too heavy and the road too bad. Father Charlebois nearly always conducted his own train.

On his arrival at Le Pas he baptized the child to whom they had called him, an infant of a few days, and, he says

There was another, 80 years old" In fact he found there an



old Protestant Indian who wished to become a Catholic. The Father instructed him briefly, baptized him conditionally, and gave him his first Communion. It was Father Charlebois' ~~last~~ <sup>triumph</sup> conquest over Protestantism, and it took place at Le Pas.

He returned to the Cumberland mission toward December 10. He would have liked to go to Lake Pelican as soon as possible in order to put an end to his long solitude. But he could not find anyone to take him there just then; all the men must have been away hunting. Perhaps they also wished to keep him with them for the Christmas festival.

It was not until the day after Christmas that he set out to rejoin Father Ronald. The roads were bad and the temperatures rigorous. The trip which should have taken but three days, took five; and out of the four travelling nights they passed two in the open. Here is how these campings in the hotel of the firmament are conducted. While one party of the travellers is occupied in "making" the wood for the night, which means to cut it in the forest, the others clear out a space for the camp by sweeping away the snow with the help of their snow-shoes. This snow is heaped on the side of the camp from which the wind comes and forms a kind of shelter against it. The snow cleared away, more or less, they spread out a couch of fir branches. Then they light a good fire upon which they boil tea, and cook, or reheat the provisions that must serve them for supper. The repast finished, and the prayer said, they spread the blankets upon the couch of aromatic fir branches, and each one wraps himself up as best he can.

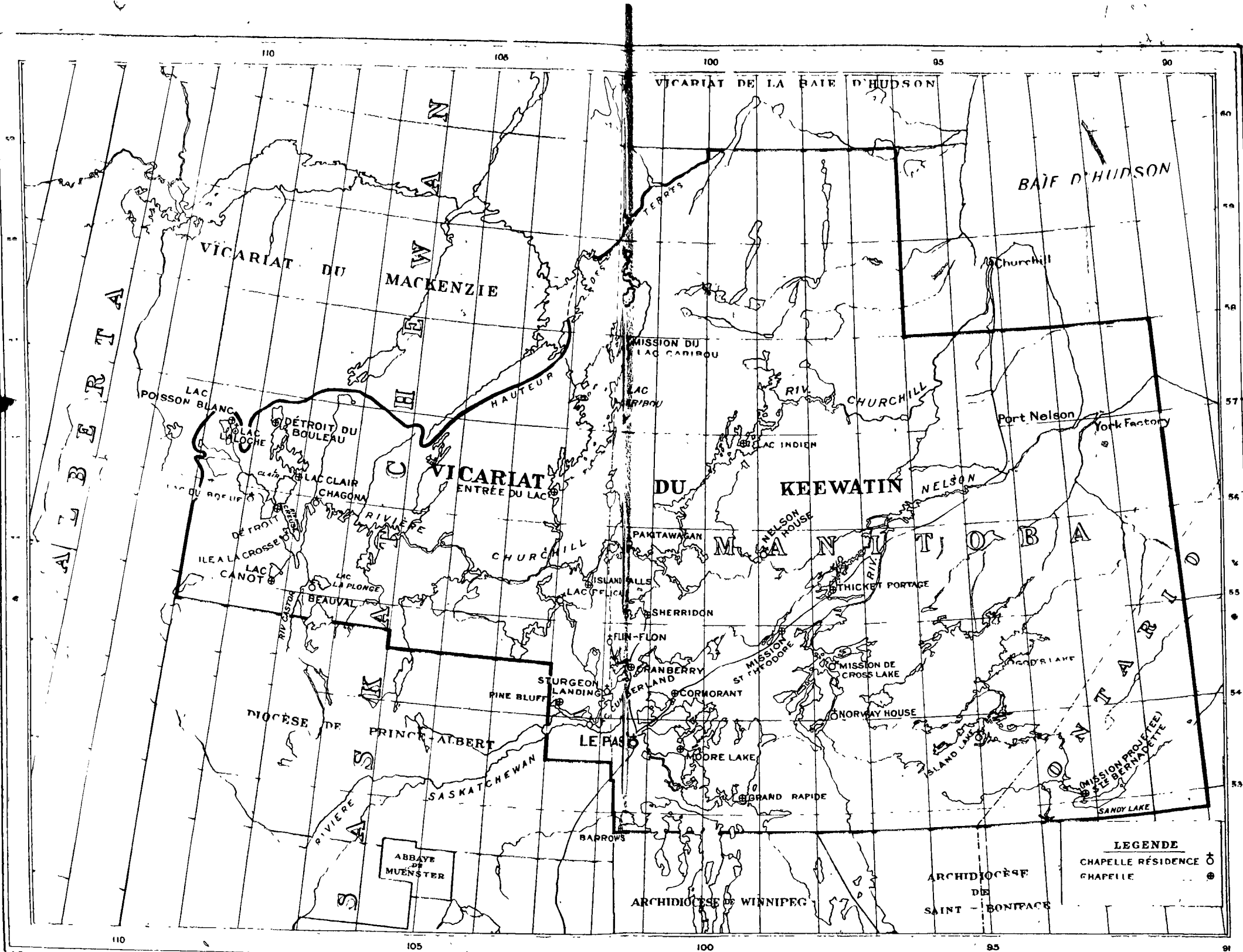
It is seldom possible to sleep in these soft beds for the first few times. When one has become used to them, and the temperature does not fall to less than 30 degrees below, one is generally able to keep out the cold and get a little sleep. But if it falls to 40 degrees below, and lower, one must be an Indian in order to sleep. The cold penetrating through the fir-branch floor always seems to find an opening in the blankets through which to reach the traveller who passes the night in trying to stop up the holes through which the cold assails him. In closing one he makes two or three others, and so the endless night passes in this entertaining exercise which makes the moment when the guide will rekindle the fire greatly to be desired. The

signal is at last given for the general arising and one arises more weary than on lying down in the evening.

It was then no matter for surprise that Father Charlebois passing those two nights in the open could not get a wink of sleep. Once even, when he had drawn closer to the fire which he had re-kindled to warm himself, he had set fire to his blanket and he barely escaped being burned alive. To crown his misfortunes the provisions failed them, and on their last day both dogs and men had to breakfast with Duke Humphrey. Happily they arrived at St. Gertrude's Mission, Lake Pelican, that day about noon and the cordial reception of Father Bonald soon made the young missionary forget the fatigues of the road, and the miseries of his loneliness at the Cumberland Mission. It was December 30, 1887.

The two Fathers spent New Year's Day at the mission, and Father Charlebois remained there during the first months of 1888. According to his own account his chief employments were: "to fill the position of sacristan and study the Cree language." During this time Father Bonald occupied himself with the work of his ministry. (*Petites Annales*, 1892.)

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## CHAPTER II

### St. Joseph's Mission on Lake Cumberland (1888-1900)

Cumberland had long been an important centre of the Hudson Bay's territory when it was first visited by Fathers Taché and Laflèche, O.M.I., the first Catholic priests to set foot in that country, on their way to Ile à la Grosse. Afterward the missionaries visited the post several times on their passage through the district, but until 1877, no one was specially charged to care for it.

Father Med. Paquette went to live there in 1877 and he put the mission under the patronage of St. Joseph. He selected a little point of land to the south of the lake where he built a log house twenty-two feet square. Part of this house was used for a chapel and the other was the missionary's residence. It was all exceedingly poor, the inside as well as the outside, and the priest's life was of the most precarious description in the midst of an almost entirely Protestant community. There were only about thirty Catholics, while the Protestants numbered three hundred, and there were numerous unbelievers. What is worse, these people had been for a long while in contact with the servants of the Hudson Bay Company, many of whom were a poor example which made conversions the more difficult wherever this contact existed.

Toward 1880, Father Lecoq, O.M.I., was sent there to keep Father Paquette company, but soon he was sent to another mission and Father Lecoq then replaced him. The new missionary decided to build a church which would be a little less unworthy of our Lord than the half shack which was His share and His missionary's abode besides. He had already laid the foundations for the proposed building when, for want of means, Bishop Grandin decided to withdraw the priest from this

post. So the church which was hardly begun in 1885 was not finished until ten years later. During the next two years the Cumberland Mission was visited at irregular intervals only by Father Ronald who lived 135 miles away, at Lake Pelican.

In our last chapter we saw that young Father Charlebois lived there for three months in 1887. At the end of that year he went to Lake Pelican where he remained during the first months of 1888. He was obliged to return to Cumberland in the middle of March in order to celebrate Easter there, on April 1 of that year, and he remained there afterward in order to prepare the little ones, and the adults also, for confirmation which they were waiting to receive from Bishop Gréudin.

We have no details concerning this visit of the Bishop, not even the exact date. All we know is that he visited the northern, and north eastern missions of his diocese that summer, and that he met Father Charlebois during that visit; from a letter dated September 10 of the same year, he excuses himself for not having replied sooner to the missionary's letter which must have crossed him on the road. "To tell the truth," he wrote, "I was not very scrupulous about it, for having met you I had already replied to it in advance."

Solitude weighed heavily upon the young missionary. We even think that it was the greatest trial of missionary life to his affectionate disposition. We have seen that it made him weep from the time of his first arrival in Cumberland. At this time he wrote to his brother William, "I wept a great deal over your letter. I was alone in my little room and gave free vent to my tears. You will find them all again in the Sacred Heart of Jesus where I was careful to deposit them. The Divine Heart is my refuge at these times. He also renders my tears sweet and delicious. In fact to weep with Jesus is the greatest earthly happiness. "Blessed are those who weep". I never understood that truth so well before. You see, it is one of those things that one learns more by practice than by theory."

He wrote to his sister, Madame Lajeunesse, on June 6: "I am beginning to grow accustomed to my solitary life. I do not weep so often as I did last autumn. That does not prove that I am happier for I found so much happiness in my tears that I am not able to weep."

He left St. Joseph's Mission for some weeks during June in order to visit the Crees at Pakitawagan, and build them a little chapel. This place is situated upon the English, or Churchill River, a hundred and fifty miles north of Lake Pelican. The Indians who were somewhat numerous there were all Catholics who had been visited at irregular intervals by Father Bonald. But his visits had necessarily been only short ones, and no real settlement had been made among them. However these Indians were in the best dispositions and filled the heart of the missionary with consolation. He remained with these good Christians for five or six weeks instructing and catechising them, while working at the building of the little chapel which he dedicated to the Sacred Heart. He cites several edifying incidents of these poor Indians in his little journal.

But trials were not wanting to him even there. He writes, "According to that, you will perhaps think it very enjoyable to stay among the Indians. Do not be too sure about it. It is pleasant when we love God a great deal. That condition wanting, we could not remain here a week. Bishop Grandin was right in saying at every visit to us in the novitiate or scholasticate: "If you want to go out to the North West, love God a great deal." It is true missionary life among the Indians is a continual death to self, death to daintiness, death to sensuality, death to self-will, death to the whole being, but not to the soul which finds its life in these things. So if you want to become humble, gentle and detached from yourself, come out among the Indians." (*Petites Annales*, 1895.) Father Charlebois worked upon his chapel while he was instructing his Indians. He had to do the greater part of the work himself, for, as he said one day, his Indian helpers had no heart for work except when they were at the table. He finished the outside of the building that summer; and the interior on the following year.

From Pakitawagan he returned to Lake Pelican arriving about the end of August. He wrote to his sister Madame La jeunesse on August 14 to condole with her on the death of her daughter Marie-Louise, the girl whose vocation had so much interested him while he was still a scholastic. He permits the natural tenderness of his soul to overflow in this letter, but it is a wholly Christian tenderness sanctified by the love of God



and confident abandonment to the divine will "I have wept," he writes, "over the death of this beloved niece, but my greatest pain was the thought of your sorrow on this sad occasion. Truly God must love you very much because He asks so many and such painful sacrifices from you. I have no doubt that you accept these trials in a spirit of faith and resignation to His will. You know that whatever comes to us it is because God wills it that way, and God cannot will anything that is not for our good. Although this looks like a misfortune it is for our good nevertheless. Here is a truth that we believe, and that we must believe. That thought leaves no room for unhappiness. It is no doubt impossible to silence nature, but faith must dominate us: we must resign our wills to Divine Providence."

He had already written to the same sister before his departure from Cumberland on June 6, probably on account of the illness which preceded this death, "I envy your lot, because you still have this happiness of being able to weep. Yes, my dear sister, do not consider your tears as a misfortune, but rather esteem them as precious graces. Yes, yes, it is a real grace to be able to weep when we have taken the precaution to make our tears flow into the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The soul is then a thousand times happier than if it were to find itself in the midst of all this world's joys."

Father Charlebois did not make a long stay at Lake Pelican when he returned there from Pakitawagan. Without even returning to Cumberland, he started again, toward the end of August, to go and evangelize the Crees at the entrance of Lake Caribou (Reindeer Lake). He made that trip on the Hudson Bay Company's barge. On September 6, when he had arrived at his destination, he wrote his brother William a letter telling about the chief incidents of the voyage. He had found there a hitherto rather neglected band of Crees but they had not afforded him great consolation. For all that he had the happiness of receiving the abjuration of a Protestant woman, which consoled him a little.

He expected to be able to travel from the entrance of the Lake to the Mission of St. Peter situated about two hundred miles away, at the other end of the lake. But as the Company's barges were not crossing the lake that summer he was obliged to return to Pelican with them, to keep company with Father

Bonald with whom he hoped to spend the winter. But Father Gasté, the superior of the district, yielding no doubt to the entreaties of the Cumberland Catholics, sent him the order to go and stay there. That was the beginning of solitude.

This was evidently painful for Father Charlebois, but his spirit of faith made him accept the order as an expression of God's will, and he submitted without a murmur. He had only one fear which was that it should not be according to the will of his higher superior, Bishop Grandin, who had told him to stay at Lake Pelican. He must have written to him about it for Bishop Grandin replied, on October 10, 1888: "You did right by going to Cumberland since Father Gasté gave the order. However I fear for both you and dear Father Bonald the isolation your separation will cause you."

This solitude was to last the young missionary for twelve long years during which he was to see his brethren only occasionally as the Fathers passed by him on their way to or from Prince Albert, or when he went himself to confession at Lake Pelican or on the business of his mission to Prince Albert.

God no doubt imposed this terrible trial upon him for his sanctification, as He imposed many others upon him, later on, which we cannot all chronicle. But, as Bishop Grandin had said to him in 1887, "God knew he was able to bear the trial otherwise He would not have exposed him to it."

In fact we shall hear no more complaints about the suffering caused by this isolation, any more than about the poverty and insufficiency of the food, nor of the fatigues of the journeys, nor of the coarseness of the Indians, nor of their ingratitude. He accepted all these sufferings in good part as being a portion of his missionary functions. Better still, he will make them means of sanctification for himself, and for the souls whose salvation was the object of his labors.

In the intimate notes that he addressed to his brother William at this time we read: "Since my last retreat my mind has dwelt upon one thought. It is to become a martyr. That is no small ambition, is it? You will at once ask me, who will be the executioners? That is very simple, they will be the mosquitoes; they will be my Pierriche; they will be the children of my catechism class; they will be my faults, my temptations, my pains, my privations, and all the rest of it. I do not seek a little

martyrdom lasting for a few hours, but a life long martyrdom. As I am never for a single moment without having something to suffer, I tell myself why not accept everything as martyrdom. Would that not be as pleasing to God as the momentary sufferings of the true martyrs? So I will think of myself as being burned at the stake at a slow fire that will keep me alive for a long while. I assure you this thought is a great help to suffer everything with patience."

We acknowledge that the reading of these lines was a veritable revelation. They made us understand that apparent lack of feeling with which we have so often seen Bishop Charlebois endure the fatigues, pains and privations of every kind with which he was overburdened on his journeys, sufferings that his companions, alas! found unendurable. But we believe also that it was partly due to the isolation which placed him under the necessity of continually withdrawing within himself, and of suffering alone under the eye of God, never being able to unbosom himself or seek courage and counsel in the heart of a friend. Certainly he could not confide his sufferings and anxieties to his Indians. We think that his necessity for keeping his sufferings hidden gave him that appearance of coldness and reserve that made him seem unapproachable at first encounter. What a torment that impossibility of opening the heart can be for the solitary missionary! But, what a means of sanctification it becomes for him, who like Bishop Charlebois, knows how to accept it, and everything else in the spirit of faith. One can easily understand his incessantly repeated words: "If we are not saints, then we are fools." That is surely true of every man, but it is more true of the missionary than of any other.

Beginning in the autumn of 1888, Father Charlebois' field of apostolic work was St. Joseph's Mission with its dependencies of Le Pas, and Grand Rapids, in addition to the numerous fishing and hunting stations where whim or necessity carried his flock within a radius of a hundred miles around Cumberland. Nearly every year he had also to take a trip to Prince Albert for the re-victualing of his mission. It was about two hundred and fifty miles, and either going or returning he ministered to a few Catholics at Fort la Corne, situated about one hundred miles north of Cumberland.

Le Pas is about forty-five miles from Cumberland by the winter road; in summer it is necessary to make a long detour in order to reach the Saskatchewan, whence one follows the windings of the river, thus doubling the distance and making it a journey of from ninety to one hundred miles.

To reach Grand Rapids, travelling either upon the ice or by water, the distance is about the same after leaving Le Pas, from one hundred and forty-five to one hundred and fifty miles, as we said above. So in winter the distance to this mission from Cumberland is about two hundred miles, while it is two hundred and fifty in summer. In either event one has to go through Le Pas.

We cannot follow Bishop Charlebois in all his comings and goings through this huge territory during the twelve years of his Cumberland service; we will only tell of the most striking incidents, and the most unusual trips. For the rest, let it suffice to say that he went to Grand Rapids every year at least once, and nearly always twice, once in summer and once in winter. Either going or returning he always stopped at the Le Pas Mission to which place he made one or two additional visits every year. We see also that nearly every month he visited hunting and fishing parties once or twice by Saskatchewan River, Beaver Lake, Pine Bluff, and the rest. In addition to these regular missionary visits he went frequently to visit a band of heathen Indians who lived ordinarily among the Le Pas mountains, about sixty miles above the town.

It is important to note also that these journeys were not so easily made in the North Eastern missions as in those in the North West of the Vicariate, in the Ile à la Crosse district where the natives were converted to the Catholic faith at the first attempt, and showed themselves anxious to render the visits of the missionary as easy as possible. The natives in that section would come in winter to fetch the missionary with two dog trains, one for him and the other for provisions and baggage. So the Father had neither to walk nor to put on his snow shoes unless he was pleased to do so. But in any case he had to feed the Indians and their dogs; but the honor of helping the priest in the ministry he was exercising among them was considered sufficient reward, and they did not ask for any payment.

In the North Eastern missions, among Indians who were either pagans deeply rooted in their superstitions, or Protestants who had been transformed into fanatics by their ministers, and all spoiled through the bad example of the white with whom they had mingled, converts were made one by one, and the will to help the missionaries was not so good. Among the Indians and half breeds even the Catholics demanded that the Father would both feed and pay them, much as though it were a question of an inn keeper or some kind of trader. Taking into consideration the extreme poverty of the missions, this put a serious obstacle in the way of the missionary's zeal and he usually took the journey alone, or with but one guide, from motives of economy. This obliged him to run behind the dogs in the winter season for the whole trip, unless he was forced to go before them and break out a road with his snow shoes. In the summer he would have to paddle all day and transport his canoe and baggage upon his back in the innumerable portages which lend attractiveness to the land.

We can understand from this that when Father Charlebois reports that he made a good trip, it means that he suffered no more than having had to run or row the whole day, and transport his canoe and baggage upon his own back at every portage he came to. So we understand that the beauties and enjoyments of his trips were altogether relative ones. But more than all we must remember that all he had to sustain his strength was a little of dried fish or meat that was as tough as shoe leather, and its only seasoning a piece of broiled bacon. And it was a fortunate thing when even these unappetizing provisions were not wanting to him.

But these physical fatigues and material sufferings were as nothing to this valiant missionary when the price of them all was his arrival in time to administer a dying person, or better still to convert a heretic or baptize a pagan. He forgot it all then as he uttered a sincere *Deo gratias* that came from the depths of his soul.

Unfortunately, since we are only writing the biography of an illustrious missionary, we cannot cite here all the edifying incidents which we have under this head. We take one by chance which will serve to show us the courage and good humour with which he underwent these fatigues.

"It was in February 1895, when telling about a trip he had just taken to Lake Pelican in order to meet Father Bonald and make his confession, that he wrote to a scholastic in Ottawa: "It was four months since I had had this happiness (of making his confession) and it was quite legitimate to grant it to me. But God wished me to pay dearly for it. The five dogs that I had hired in the belief that they would draw me the whole way turned out to be worthless. They could barely follow us and there were only the provisions and baggage in the wretched train. I had to walk all the way both going and returning. My poor legs found it very hard; they felt all kinds of pains so that I could not sleep. In passing through a narrow strait on the return trip, my guide lost his way and for want of knowing better entered a very dangerous place where no other human being has been before in the memory of man because it is nearly never frozen. The Indians who followed us said that it was a miracle that we were not swallowed up.

"A little further on we were surprised in the midst of a lake by a great cloud of snow. It was so thick that we could see neither earth nor sky. We groped our way. When we at length found out where we were, we came to another narrow strait which was barely frozen over, and where we should undoubtedly have been sunk. So we had been at the gates of death twice in the same day, but the good Mother of the missionaries was there watching over us. Help me to thank her."

It was not the first, nor the last time, that Bishop Charlebois was in imminent danger of drowning and that he had been preserved in a miraculous fashion, on the testimony of eyewitnesses.

We will let him continue the story himself: "I arrived here," he relates, "half dead with fatigue, 'No matter,' I said to myself; 'it is my last trip, and I am going to take a proper rest.' But as usual Man proposes, and God disposes. Scarcely three days had gone by before they came to fetch me to give the last sacraments to a person who was dying fifty miles from here. My legs protested, they kicked, but duty was stronger than they, and the salvation of a soul comes first. Going, I was able to be drawn nearly all the way, but I could not put my feet into the carriage on the return trip for the dogs had a load. Setting off at five o'clock in the morning, I walked the fifty miles before

six o'clock in the evening. On arriving I had to find out if my legs were in a good humour. They supported me, but with groans and protests. I let them talk, knowing very well that a rest would bring them back to a good humour. They have been ready to start off again for some time." Later on he complains that he has made no convert that year. "I am afraid," he says, "that this year will not be so fruitful in this regard as the last one." (Letter to a Scholastic.) But that was only in February.

He was in at least as great a danger, again during the winter of 1888 1889, as the one we have already related. On his return from the Le Pas Mission accompanied by one man only who walked on ahead to brush out a road while the Father followed with the dogs. In the midst of a fearful snow storm the dogs lost track of the guide without the priest noticing it. They were going straight toward a very dangerous rapid. The Father saw suddenly that the dogs were already beginning to sink in the water, and that they were right upon the rapid. He could do nothing in this dangerous position without making matters worse, and he had to wait until the guide whom he had recalled came to help him out of the dangerous spot. That might take a considerable time. Those who know how thin the ice becomes at the head of a rapid will understand how much more than wonderful it was that dogs, train, and missionary were not drawn into the torrent. He himself knew it: "If the ice had given way," he wrote, "I should have been lost. I have no doubt about it, it was the good Mother of the missionaries who saved me." (*Petites Annales*, 1895.)

He went back again to evangelize the Crees of Pakitawagan during the summer of 1889. There he finished the inside of the chapel he had built the previous summer. He built a little house about twelve feet square beside it to serve as a residence for the missionary on the occasion of his visits to this place. He returned to Lake Pelican on September 24 and passed the rest of that autumn there in the company of Father Bonald. He only returned to Cumberland in the beginning of December.

He was nearly lost in a great snow storm in 1890 before reaching Le Pas on his way to Grand Rapids. Afterward, when he had come to Grand Rapids he had a violent attack of influenza which nearly proved fatal.

He made the trip to the entrance of Reindeer Lake again in the August of that year. This time Father Charlebois crossed the lake in the barge of the Company. He disembarked at St. Peter's Mission where he found that Father Gasté, who was also a solitary because his companion, Father Ancel, had not yet returned from a trip to St. Albert. The Cumberland missionary had only intended to stay a few days at St. Peter's Mission wishing to avail himself of the returning barge to regain St. Joseph's Mission. But Father Gasté, using his authority as superior of the district, kept him there for a month. This was far from being displeasing to the young missionary, and he took advantage of the delay to make his annual retreat during which he read the life of the Curé d'Ars, by Father Monnin. "How edifying it is! how encouraging" he writes. "Here is a passage which has done me so much good: the holy pastor was questioning a possessed woman and the demon reproached him thus: "Why do you preach so simply? You pass for an ignoramus. Why do you not preach in style as they do in the big towns? How those great sermons please me. They do not worry anybody. They let people do as they please... if there were three like you upon earth my kingdom would be destroyed. You have taken more than eighty thousand souls from me."

These reproaches of the devil naturally did not make the Curé d'Ars change his methods, but they were a great encouragement and a great consolation to Father Charlebois who happened to have been asking himself just then if he were not preaching too simply, and if he ought not to make his sermons a little more ornamental.

He left Reindeer Lake at the end of September and arrived back again at Cumberland at the end of October. (*Privatim*, 1890.)

Meanwhile the diocese of St. Albert had been divided. Its Northern part had been taken to form the new province of Saskatchewan, and Bishop Pascal, O.M.I., had been nominated its Vicar Apostolic. The new bishop had been consecrated in France during the summer of 1891, and they were awaiting his arrival at Prince Albert where he was to reside, in the beginning of October. Father Charlebois left Cumberland on



September 26 to go and meet him with the hope of obtaining a companion

But there were many making the same petition and the new bishop arrived alone. The Cumberland missionary had to be contented with saluting his new superior like all the rest upon his arrival upon October 6. A few days afterward he left with a young man who was to accompany him on the road to his mission. But he had spent two weeks at Prince Albert amid his brethren, and that had done him good.

The priest with his companion left Prince Albert in a little flat boat. They descended the Saskatchewan. The flat boat was pretty well loaded and they had attached the canoe in which they had come to it. This did not fail to make trouble for them when descending the rapids. However they arrived at Cumberland without any serious difficulty on the evening of the fourteenth and set out to cross the lake. A violent storm overtook them in the midst of the crossing and they were in great danger of perishing. Happily a barge belonging to the Hudson Bay Company joined them and took them and their baggage aboard, but the darkness became so great, and the storm so violent that the barge herself was on the point of stranding upon a sandy shallow where she would have been the toy of the waves. Suddenly there fell a calm. "It was such that everybody was astounded," wrote Father Charlebois, "in fact I have never seen such a violent storm subside so suddenly. I could not help thinking that this was once more the doing of the good Mother of the missionaries." (*Voix d'un Jeune Missionnaire*, No 16.)

The young priest arrived at his mission on October 15 and passed the rest of the year there without any other incident than the conversion of the young man who had accompanied him on the trip to Prince Albert. No doubt the well nigh miraculous manner of their escape had touched him, and caused him to abjure his Protestantism and embrace the Catholic faith.

He made a journey to Le Pas in December where he found a half breed theologian. This man had silenced a Protestant minister rather sharply a few days before the priest's arrival. The minister had been trying to make him deny his Catholic faith in order to draw him into Protestantism. Passing from defence

to the attack. the half breed asked the minister several questions and he was already embarrassed. Finally, the half-breed asked: "Does the Scripture not forbid lying, and speaking ill of the neighbor?" "Assuredly," replied the minister. "Then," said the half-breed, "why do you do that every day?" Upon that the minister hurried away without further ado.

The customary visit to Grand Rapids took place in January 1892. The trip occupied fifteen days without further incident than the harvesting of an abundant crop of lice; scarcely agreeable companions of which Father Charlebois had considerable trouble in ridding himself. This again proved to be one of the habitual pleasures of his missionary life.

He travelled to Fort Nelson, or Nelson-House, in March. This post is situated about a hundred and fifty miles to the east of Pakitawagan, about half-way between Churchill and Nelson; it is very difficult of approach. There was a fairly numerous Cree population there, but Methodism had already gained these poor people, and all the religion they knew was a hatred of Catholicism. To make matters worse, a too long contact with the Hudson Bay travellers had also corrupted them. During a few of the preceding years Father Bonald had paid them a few visits and had even effected a few conversions, but these converts who were only slightly instructed, and scarcely confirmed in their faith, in addition to being surrounded by Protestants were far from fervent. Their faith needed fortifying and it was desirable to increase their numbers by fresh conquests.

That was the reason why Father Charlebois had been appointed to remain among them for a fairly long period. He was to apply himself to the instruction of the converts, and try to gain a few Protestants, besides building a small chapel for them. In a word, he was to found a mission under the invocation of the Assumption.

Leaving Cumberland he went first to Lake Pelican. Thence he set out for Nelson-House with Brother Caley and two natives. However it all went wearisomely as far as Pakitawagan. From that point they were to take a guide, for neither the priest nor his men knew the road. It happened that when they arrived at Pakitawagan they found the place deserted. Famine

and sickness had forced the Indians to flee and this had happened so long before that their tracks had completely disappeared, and they knew not where to seek them.

The situation was critical. To rush forward into an unknown territory with insufficient provisions would be to expose themselves to the danger of being lost or dying of hunger unless they found the Indians. On the other hand there was a chance of meeting up with some of them, and if they were to turn back after making half of the journey they would fail in the foundation of the Nelson-House mission, cast away the money already expended and the hardships they had already endured. In addition to that their provisions would become exhausted before they could make one half of their return trip.

Putting his trust in Providence, Father Charlebois decided in favor of continuing the expedition. He had only a roughly sketched map of the country drawn by an Indian; that was his only guide with which he was to cross a number of lakes and find the exact entrance for each portage separating them, under pain of finding his party irremediably lost. But Father Charlebois who was in command of the party made no mistakes, and after having travelled sixty miles, just as their provisions were running low, they came upon the men of Pakitawagan encamped at the road leading to Nelson-House. Father Charlebois thanked the Mother of Missionaries again for that. Truly he was right in this, for it was almost a miracle that they had not lost themselves.

But sickness was reigning in the camp at which they had just arrived. The Father's presence among them was a great consolation for these poor folks. After profiting by his ministry they furnished him with fish and meat, sufficient for the rest of his journey.

He arrived at Nelson-House toward the beginning of April and he spent Easter there. His first care was to begin the building of a chapel while at the same time he catechized and instructed the natives, which means to say that he enjoyed not one instant's rest during the whole of his stay, for during his exercise of his priestly duties he had at the same time to keep close watch over every detail of the building and even had to execute the greater share of the work himself, especially in the

case of the fitting of parts, and arrangement of the interior of the building. His whole material consisted of hand-sawn planks made by the Indians. This means that they were of every conceivable thickness and width. They had first to be reduced to a common size for the flooring and wainscotting. How many strokes of the plane must he have made in order to effect this! Only those who have worked with such materials can form a just idea of that work. He wrote himself to his brother William: "I myself had to work to death to found this mission."

He was fairly well satisfied with the spiritual fruits of this undertaking. The Catholics profited well by the presence of the priest among them, and the whole community seemed well disposed toward the Catholic faith. Had it only been possible to station a missionary at this point, it is probable that the majority of the Indians would have been converted. Father Charlebois had hoped to be that missionary, but in fact it was only thirty five years later that Nelson-House had a resident missionary.

Father Charlebois started to return to Cumberland at the end of June, but he did not follow the same route as the one he had taken in going there. By dint of crossing a string of rivers and lakes, and making the portages between, he at length arrived at the Nelson River. Entering by it into Lake Winnipeg, he came to Norway-House from whence he made for Grand Rapids where he embarked upon a steamer going up the Saskatchewan. He arrived at Cumberland on July 15 where he began to prepare for the arrival of Bishop Pascal due to make his first episcopal visitation of that year in this portion of his vicariate. This visitation took place at St. Joseph's Mission from July 29 to August 2.

The old Cumberland building which had been somewhat roughly put together in 1877 by Father Paquette had begun to fall into ruins. It was urgently in need of repairs. That was done in the spring of 1893. Father Charlebois had new sleepers put in, renovated the roof and stuffed the holes which permitted the cold to enter too freely during the winter.

A young priest, Father Maisonneuve, O.M.I., whom they had been expecting for a long while arrived on Good Friday in the midst of a wild snow-storm. He was quite worn

out with travelling from Prince Albert in the worst season of the year, when the thaw makes travelling conditions so difficult. The young priest was worn out. The whole day of Holy Saturday passed, and he came back to life on Easter Sunday. A few days afterward he was able to start for Lake Pelican where he was to be a companion for Father Bonald.

Many conversions from Protestantism took place during the years 1893 1894 at the Cumberland mission. These conversions had the effect of exasperating the Protestant ministers at Le Pas, all the more because Father Charlebois had effected them without any arguments. He never attacked the ministers, nor their religion, but confined his action to simple explanations of the Catholic faith. It seemed to him that the Faith was beautiful enough to draw souls of good will by its simple exposition. Results proved the excellence of his method, and the Protestants were not able to use a similar one because they had neither certain dogmas, nor a solidly founded scheme of morality. Their whole preaching took the form of senseless commonplaces, or furious and lying attacks on the Catholic faith. Neither the Indians nor the half-breeds failed to notice this difference in methods and their conclusions were not favorable to the poor ministers. In the end conversions were multiplied at Le Pas as much as at Cumberland.

The very number of these conversions soon put the missionary into a fresh embarrassment. The Cumberland chapel which had always been very unworthy of our Lord, now became very much too small to hold the old Catholics with the new converts. It therefore became necessary to recommence the building of the church begun in 1885 by Father Lecoq, and since then left unfinished. But where were they to find the means necessary for this construction work?

Father Charlebois asked the men to help and they promised him readily enough. But all what their poverty enabled them to give was their labor, and that would not furnish the resources to procure the material necessary for the construction of a church, and less for the necessary furnishings. But for all that they started the work. During the months of June and July the frame of the building was set up, closed in, roofed and plastered both within and without. The Father had sent out a call to his friends in the East, and they had not failed him.

How much must not this devoted missionary, at once architect, contractor and executor of every delicate part of its construction, have put into this building which measured forty-six by twenty-five feet. Actually the Cumberland Church makes a good figure among the mission churches, and it passed for a masterpiece by a good title in 1894.

We must leave the description of this church and of the mission it served to Father Boissin, O.M.I., who landed there a few years afterward. "The church, which is dedicated to St. Joseph, is quite large and very well decorated. A large picture catechism, perfectly framed, ornaments the walls. The main altar is at the end of the church. It is built of wood very artistically carved. The missionary's house stands beside God's house. The worthy Father Charlebois received me with open arms. Our little residence conforms well with holy poverty, but it is not for all that wanting in the necessary conveniences. A little garden supplied us with cabbage, carrots, etc., the cows gave us milk, and the horses and big dogs lent us their legs for our travels. Lake Cumberland with its thousands of fishes lies only a few paces from the mission and above us, flying in the air are big birds which ask nothing better than to supply our needs. Providence is very generous toward us."

Father Charlebois went as far as Prince Albert during the summer of 1895 and brought home a cow which was probably the mother of those which furnished milk for Father Boissin when he arrived in Cumberland in 1899.

The end of 1895 and the whole of 1896 passed in ordinary work. There was nothing particular to record except the zeal and devotedness of the missionary for the spiritual and temporal welfare of his flock in whose service he spent himself, literally both body and soul.

Bishop Pascal went to Cumberland for his visitation in June 1897, going on to Lake Pelican and Reindeer Lake afterward. He had planned to visit Le Pas and Grand Rapids on the return trip, and that is why Father Charlebois left immediately after the Bishop's departure for Lake Pelican, that he might build a chapel there which should be a little less distressed than the ten feet square shack that had received him in 1887, and still formed the whole religious equipment of Le Pas.

Accompanied by three or four half-breeds, he went down the Saskatchewan to a little thicket situated about seventy miles north of Le Pas. There they cut logs for the building, squared them, and then dragged them to the river by hand. There they made them into a raft formed by the piling of them one upon another. They then floated them down the stream to a place within three quarters of a mile of the present cathedral, at about the spot where the saw-mill stables stand today. There they raised the new chapel; it measured twenty two feet by fourteen.

This chapel was to serve as a cathedral later on, when Bishop Charlebois first arrived there as Vicar Apostolic; but it was not then situated on its present site, for at the time of the establishment of the saw-mill the land had been sold and the chapel was moved about three quarters of a mile higher up where it may still be seen today behind the new cathedral.

Although it was not completely finished the chapel was nevertheless up at the end of July, and just as it was then, it could receive the blessing of Bishop Pascal as he passed on his return from Reindeer Lake on August 6.

Father Charlebois accompanied the Bishop to Grand Rapids where, after ministering to the faithful of that mission they separated: Bishop Pascal taking the boat for Winnipeg, and Father Charlebois returning to Cumberland.

Father Bonald was elected a delegate to the General Chapter of the Oblates in 1898. He requested Father Charlebois to visit Nelson-House in his stead. Father Charlebois accepted the task with enthusiasm and took advantage of the trip to visit Grand Rapids. Leaving Cumberland on June 24, after exercising his functions in favor of the faithful at Le Pas and Grand Rapids, he continued his journey by Lake Winnipeg which he crossed to Norway-House and thence to Cross Lake. He reascended the stream from there going toward Nelson-House passing through several places inhabited by Indians and half-breeds, all of them Protestants. Nearly all the natives he met with after leaving Norway-House had never even seen a Catholic priest.

This seemingly impossible anomaly was inexplicable at first sight. In reality it was due to the bigotry of the Hudson Bay Company in the Canadian West. Until 1870, and even

later than that, it was practically impossible to penetrate into the country without the permission of the self-styled Honorable Company. But during the second decade of the Nineteenth Century, the President and chief executive of the said Company was Lord Selkirk, a Scotsman with an open mind and really broad ideas. He understood that the only way to have peace and bring true civilization into the country was to procure priests of their own religion for the Catholics who were then already numerous in the North West. Hence came his appeal to the Bishop of Quebec who decided the sending out of Father Provencher and the first missionaries to the Red River in 1818.

But the descendants of the noble lord, and his successors at the head of the Company were far from sharing his tolerant ideas. Not being able entirely to revoke the concessions made by him, they at least put as many obstacles in the way of the missionaries' work as they could.

Let it be understood that we are speaking of the higher directors of the Company, of those without whose authority nothing could be done. For, among the subaltern officers with whom the missionaries had to deal personally, those who proved annoying and fanatical were the exceptions. As a rule they were very obliging to the Catholic priests, and rendered them many services. For the greater part of the time they preferred them to their own Protestant ministers, but they could do nothing contrary to the formal orders, issuing from the general offices.

Catholic priests were forbidden to penetrate into Keewatin, that is to say into the territory to the east of Winnipeg as far as Hudson Bay and the North Pole, under pain of refusal of all transportation for merchandize upon the boats of the Company. That hunting ground was reserved for Protestant ministers of every denomination. To such a point was this the case, I remember, that at the time of the first visits of Father Bonald to Nelson-House, about 1886 or 1887, they made a great tempest in a teapot.

Bishop Faraud had already found means to provide the Mackenzie missions by way of the Athabaska River through Edmonton and Athabaska Landing. Thus he became independent of the caprices of the Company's officials. The Missions of



Lake Pelican, and Cumberland, on the other hand, could deal directly with Prince Albert by way of the Saskatchewan. There remained the missions of Reindeer Lake and Ile à la Crosse to be taken care of. When the missionaries of this last district were consulted by Bishop Grandin, they replied that if the Honorable Company wished to cause them trouble, the Company would be the loser, and that if they wished to lay the blame upon the Fathers at Reindeer Lake there were ways of making them pay for their unjust dealings. No doubt the Company understood that, for they remained quiet, and thus the country became accessible to the Catholic missionaries, but their small numbers and lack of resources had prevented them from profiting by the situation until 1898.

Thus Father Charlebois was the very first Catholic priest to penetrate that country and, seeing him, the inhabitants who were ordinarily entirely wanting in enthusiasm for their ministers were struck by the difference in method and conduct between their ministers and the priests. They received the latter with a welcome that was sympathetic nearly everywhere. Many even, among the people of Cross Lake, showed an earnest desire to have them come and establish themselves among them. This was so evident that Father Charlebois never ceased dreaming of establishing a mission in that spot. But several years were destined to elapse before the realization of his idea.

Young Father Boissin arrived in Cumberland to help Father Charlebois, at the end of the May 1899. As a matter of fact he was to replace him almost immediately as head of this mission. After having preached the exercises of a mission at Grand Rapids, Father Charlebois embarked at the end of July for Lower Canada where, says the Cumberland Chronicle, "his aged father and the various members of his family anxiously awaited him."

Speaking of this journey, he wrote to his brother William after his return: "I came back from my beautiful and beloved Canada where I tasted many joys and consolations. I had seen my beloved father once again, and my cherished relations, friends and kindly benefactors. I had been the object of their greatest tenderness; each of them had done his part to make me forget the twelve years of weariness and misery passed in the company of the Indians. And charity opened not only

the hearts but purses as well for my advantage. I met poor work men who offered me a day's pay. It filled my heart with very sweet emotions and I have come back with all those beautiful memories which sometimes make me weep. But life is a succession of joys and sorrows."

Nor were sufferings wanting to him from the day of his return to the mission field. To begin with, he found the Cumberland Indians, and the mission itself, in a bad way from the material point of view. A flood that was to keep every low lying spot in the basin of the Saskatchewan under water for three years, had just begun. In 1901 it was to spread to the basin of the Beaver and Churchill Rivers nearly entirely submerging the mission of Ile à la Crosse, making the hay harvest an impossibility, and drowning out the gardens. This was the cause of serious losses to all these missions but particularly for that of Ile à-la-Crosse where they were reduced to slaughtering the whole herd of animals. It was of considerable size.

Father Charlebois had returned from visiting his family upon September 23. "He had come back", says the Cumberland Chronicle, "very satisfied with his trip, and with fresh courage to work for the salvation of the poor Indians." It caused him acute pain when he found his mission flooded, and to learn of the deaths of several members of his flock. At the end of 1889 and in the early months of 1900 he returned to St. Joseph's Mission, making as he thought, his preparations for the founding of the Cross Lake Mission. But in the spring of 1900 he was named superior of the district and had to establish his headquarters at Lake Pelican. He left the Cumberland Mission in the hands of young Father Boissin.



## CHAPTER III

### Lake Pelican District (1900-1903)

Acting upon the report of Father Charlebois, Bishop Pascal had decided to found a mission at Cross Lake, upon the Nelson River, for he believed that the place lay within his diocese. He had directed Father Charlebois to make the foundation himself. The designated missionary saw clearly that he would have to suffer much privation and want in that place, but what did that matter? Were not the glory of God and the salvation of souls at stake? He should have left for Cross Lake in June of 1900 according to the orders he had received. He prepared the lumber for the altar and for the interior decoration of the chapel during the winter. He interested his friends and benefactors in Lower Canada during those months. They sent him money and several cases of vestments and various objects destined for the furnishing of the new foundation at Cross Lake.

But it was not yet the time destined by Providence for the foundation of that mission. A few years later it would be started by Fathers Bonald and Lecoq when the territory of Cross Lake and Norway-House would have come under the direction of the Provincial of Manitoba.

Never doubting that those places did not belong to his jurisdiction, Bishop Pascal altered his plans during the winter. Father Charlebois received a new obedience in March which directed him to relinquish the founding of a mission at Cross Lake for the time being, and to assume charge of the whole Lake Pelican district.

This was because of the precarious health of Father Bonald which necessitated his leaving that country. His unforeseen departure disorganized the missions of the whole district. Father Gasté who was the real superior was too old, and before long he

would be obliged to retire from the Indian missions. Besides, St. Peter's Mission on Reindeer Lake, where Father Gasté was stationed, was too remote to form an efficient part of the group, while the interdependence of the others was such that they needed a central authority.

Father Charlebois was therefore named superior of this district with Fathers Boissin and Rossignol for his assistants. Father Rossignol who had arrived during the summer of 1900 was to reside at Lake Pelican and Father Boissin was to take charge of the mission of St. Joseph, Cumberland. It cost Father Charlebois a great deal to give up the projected mission at Cross Lake, but ever a good religious, he saw the order of his superior as an expression of the will of God, and submitted himself heartily saying, as he did every time he saw his plans upset: "Man proposes and God disposes."

As superior of the district he was free to reside sometimes at Cumberland and sometimes at Lake Pelican, but either personally, or through his assistant priests, he had also to provide service for the chapels of ease at the entrance of Reindeer Lake, Pakitawagan, Le Pas, Grand Rapids, Nelson House, Norway House, and Cross Lake.

The office of superior in reality more than doubled the work of Father Charlebois. During the three years he was burdened with it he always kept the most fatiguing work, the longest and most difficult trips for himself. His report to the Superior of the Oblates bearing date of November 15, 1900, gives us details concerning his first year as superior.

"On June 16," we read, "Father Charlebois, Father Rossignol and Father Fournier, a secular priest from Prince Albert, disembarked at the Cumberland Mission where Father Boissin who had been in charge during his superior's absence received them with open arms. The following day being Sunday," the report continues, "we decided to have High Mass. The Mass was celebrated with deacon and sub-deacon which was a new experience for our Indians. They were proud of it, and a little overwhelmed as they asked one another why it should take three priests to offer Mass."

"The period of family life was brief. Three days later they had to disband when Father Fournier went to Grand Rapids. He did not remain there very long, as we shall hear presently.

Father Boissin stayed on by himself at Cumberland, for Father Rossignol and I took the road for Lake Pelican. We went by barge with eight men in the crew, and a freight of six tons. Father Rossignol and I were the passengers. It took us eight days to cover the hundred and forty-five miles separating the missions of Cumberland and Lake Pelican, going by the summer road. That means that we travelled eighteen miles a day. A barge's day is reckoned from four in the morning to eight at night. The swiftness of the stream we had to ascend, numerous rapids, and several portages where everything must be carried on the back caused the slowness of our progress, but we disembarked at last at St. Gertrude's Mission. It was June 29, and my companion had reached the end of his long trip.

The Lake Pelican Indians mourned their old Pastor. That is easily understood for Father Bonald had lived among them for a long while. It was he who had converted nearly all of them from paganism or heresy, and he was so good to them. But for all that they did not hesitate to put their confidence in the new arrivals, and everyone there approached the Sacraments.

Father Charlebois did not linger long at St. Gertrude's Mission. He set off again on July 4, four days after his arrival there, to visit the more distant posts, Lake of Burnt Wood, Pakitawagan, and most important of all, Nelson-House. It was a long and difficult trip. The whole of this territory is a succession of lakes, rivers, more or less dangerous rapids. Before reaching Nelson-House he had to make 43 portages.

The good dispositions of the Indians whom he met, especially those at Pakitawagan, while causing him fresh fatigue, consoled him for his sufferings on the journey. He had come to them to instruct them, to hear their confessions, to be at their back and call all the day and nearly all the night too.

In one of those camps a good man brought him his child to be baptized. "I want to name him from you," he said. "So," writes Father Charlebois, "I named him Ovide." After the ceremony the father's most important business was to come and ask me how he should call the boy. "Ovide," I told him. "How is that? Opi? Opite?" "No, Ovide. — Obite? Opite?" In vain I spent a quarter of an hour trying to make him pronounce

Ovide. The unfortunate child will be condemned to call himself Opite, which reminds me that among the Montagnais Lucien was transformed into Le Chien (the dog), and Bernadette became Ber eldel (meat-eater). At last I arrived at Assumption Mission, Fort-Nelson, on July 14. It was the end of my trip. I passed a whole week there preaching and catechizing. Several Protestants came who never missed an exercise, but none of them had the courage to ask for admission into the Church which they both admired and esteemed. But in spite of that situation, one of them came and asked me to baptize his child although he had a minister almost at his door. 'I will begin with my little girl,' he said, 'but I will end with myself, and the rest of my family.' He has promised me that he will make his abjuration next Christmas.

"Not all of my flock had yet come. More than half of them had missed the meeting place because they had not received my letter on time, so I despatched a man to call them in. But it is a long way and they cannot be here for two weeks. Never mind, the good pastor must exercise patience."

The Indians who were already there asked the Father, while they waited for the arrival of the late comers, if he would move the chapel and the residence nearer to the Hudson Bay Company's post. It was six miles distant from the position they then occupied and it would be so much more convenient for them, in their trading, with the Company, to have the church also within their reach. The priest hesitated. He thought of the expense that would be necessary, and that his small resources would scarcely permit. "But," he writes, "when the Protestant minister came to me and with a thousand precautions made me understand that it would be much better if I were not to move my church, this was sufficient to decide me to do so. If he is trying to hold me back, I said to myself, it is because he feels that I shall thus be in a better position to make a successful fight against him. Besides, acting in opposition to the spirit of error should be to walk in the straight path of truth.

"No more hesitations therefore; the following day saw us setting to work. Church, kitchen, bell-tower, everything came down under the blows of the hatchet or hammer. We might have been taken for vandals. The Company's Agent lent us a large barge with the aid of which we easily transported our


materials. Ten strong Indians lent their aid; it did not take them long to load the barge, and so we set out in search of a new site.

"We found it at a distance of only a few acres from the Company's fort. We tied up in a little bay and I dashed into the forest axe in hand. Soon I found a pretty little eminence where everything told me that a church would look well in this pleasant spot. I celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on the following morning, and begged the Sacred Heart of Jesus to bless this place as well as our work. The men went on laboring, some cutting down trees to clear a space for the church, others carrying the numerous heavy beams upon their shoulders from the barge to the selected site. It was hard, painful work. When it was finished they showed me their shoulders, all wounds and blood.

"As for me, I was architect, contractor, carpenter, and head boss. I was at work from morning until night, handling hatchet, spirit-level, square, etc. I was obliged to delay the recitation of the breviary and my spiritual exercises until the night. They had told me that it would take at least a month to reconstruct the church, but in fact it was finished on the twelfth day. We had just finished hanging the bell when they spied a whole flotilla of canoes upon the lake. It was my people, my Indians for whom I had sent."

Father Charlebois forgets to tell us here just how many hours of sleep he had taken each night. The nights are not long up North at that time of year. When he had taken from them the time to recite his breviary and to make the other spiritual exercises prescribed by his rule, and he certainly never omitted one of them, there could not have been much time left for sleep before it was time to begin all over again.

Several Protestants from Cross Lake were among the Indians who had just arrived. These men quite upset at hearing that the priest could not go and found a mission in their country, begged him to at least visit them by passing through Cross Lake on his way back. But he had urgent business awaiting his attention at Lake Pelican and at Cumberland, so it was not possible. He promised, however, to go and see them during the following winter.





He left Nelson-House on August 6 with the promise of returning at Christmas to sing Midnight Mass for them. Then he set out on his return journey by the same way he had come with all its accompanying pleasures of rapids and portages, stopping again, as he had been forced to do in coming, at every village and camp in order to bring the help of his services to his Christians.

He was already back at Lake Pelican twelve days later. "I was tired," he wrote, "even exhausted. I could have wished for a few days' rest, but it was out of the question, for all of our Christians who belong to St. Gertrude's Mission were already grouped around the church to the number of three hundred, awaiting the opening of the retreat I had promised them. I had to be at their service for a whole week: two or three instructions every day, catechism for sixty children, and for newly-converted adults, confessions, communions, baptisms, marriages, care of the sick, consultations, directions etc. Such were the tasks each day brought me; it was far from being a rest. Father Rossignol did everything possible to help me, but as he does not yet know the language of the country he could not always do as much as he wished. That made it harder for us. But I found many consolations in seeing the good dispositions of the Indians, and all the good being wrought in their souls."

These big gatherings of the Indians are always dangerous for their morals and generally cause many disorders, and this to such a degree that we have heard missionaries asking themselves if the good effected by the instructions given, and the sacraments administered, compensates for the evil caused by the promiscuity caused by these assemblies.

In order to guard at least partially against these disorders Father Charlebois inaugurated a system upon this mission which was soon adopted by other missionaries with the best results. He named three, four, or even more policemen, according to the size of the camp, and gave them the duty of keeping order within its boundaries. The curfew rang at nine or ten o'clock in the evening and from that moment everyone had to be in his own place, except the policemen and the missionary, if he desired to share in the watch himself. No one had the right to roam about the camp and anyone found outside his own tent was reported to the priest who would reprimand him publicly

in the church on the following day, or, on occasions when the case was serious, impose a heavier punishment. This system showed very good results at Lake Pelican. After the curfew, silence reigned in the camp, or perhaps one heard the singing of hymns, the recitation of the rosary, or a little pious reading from one of the tents.

At the close of the Lake Pelican mission Father Charlebois, instead of taking a rest, re-embarked to go down the river to Cumberland where new business awaited him. It was there that he met the youthful Father Turquetil, O.M.I., lately come from France and now on his way to Reindeer Lake. "Try," begged Father Charlebois, "to do something for the evangelization of the Esquimaux; they are your next door neighbors at your mission." Twelve years later they had founded the Esquimaux Mission.

A Government commission, sent out to settle the question of scripts with the half-breeds, arrived at Cumberland at the same time as Father Charlebois. This question had been a subject of debate for a long while. The script is an official document assuring to each half-breed the right of property over a certain parcel of land in consideration of his abandonment of rights over the rest of the land. The pure Indians have reservations of greater or less extent according to the members of their tribe, moreover, each of them receives \$5 annually.

But in order that a half-breed could obtain his script it was necessary for him to present a copy of his baptismal register, and that, only the missionaries could give him. It was that he might assist Father Boissin in this extract-making from the baptismal records and to aid him in transcribing them, that Father Charlebois had come down the river to Cumberland. It was far from being an easy task for there were those who had changed their family name, perhaps three or four times, those who have never known exactly what patrons they received in baptism, others who were baptized elsewhere, often not knowing where. The two priests had plenty to keep them occupied for a week.

When the script question was finally settled, another arose which was of paramount importance to the Cumberland Mission. In accepting their scripts the half-breeds had relinquished their right to live upon the Indians reservations. Now there

were no free lands at Cumberland except those belonging to the Indians; the half-breeds therefore found themselves under the necessity of going elsewhere to seek their fortunes, and their departure would have carried off three quarters of the Catholic population. It would mean the ruin of the mission.

In order to prevent this disaster it was necessary to obtain from the Government a portion of the reservation land for the half-breeds. For eight years already Father Charlebois had been working at this, but hitherto he had not succeeded in getting anything done about it. Happily he was then enabled to settle the question with the script Commission, and thus secure for the half-breeds the free possession of lands upon which they had already settled.

When all this business was concluded he went to visit Father Fournier whom he had met last June on his way to Grand Rapids. But before he reached that place he heard that the priest had left the post and had long ago gone to St. Boniface. He had not been able to endure the solitude and sufferings of the missions during those three months. "But," wrote Father Charlebois, "if I could not meet the pastor, I could always go to see the sheep." And so he kept on his way to carry the consolations of religion to the Grand Rapids Christians. On his return to Cumberland he awaited the forming of the ice before going back to Lake Pelican where Father Rossignol had been tasting the sweets of solitude ever since the beginning of September.

The church at Lake Pelican was falling into ruins so Father Charlebois decided to build a new one. He had no sooner returned to Cumberland than accompanied by only one man he set out to cut the necessary logs to make the wooden planks for the future church. When, with the help of the same man, he had cut the logs, he sawed them into planks two inches thick which was the ordinary thickness at that time for flooring.

When this work was done it was time for him to consider visiting his distant missions and he set out on December 20 driving his dogs himself. That it to say he walked continually behind his train, pushing it through difficult places. He was going to spend Christmas at Nelson-House according to the promise he had made to his Indians there. From there he went on to Cross Lake where he baptized several Protestants. Always walking or running behind his dogs, he came to Norway-House,

and stopped at Grand Rapids Mission, and also at Le Pas. He was back to Cumberland again on January 22, 1901. Father Boissin wrote in the chronicles of the mission: "Father Charlebois arrived this morning from his long trip to Grand Rapids and Cross Lake. Good news from the last mission. Father had five baptisms in one day. The Indians are very well disposed toward our Holy Religion."

Father Charlebois stayed at St. Joseph's Mission for a few days after that fatiguing trip to rest, and above all to give an opportunity to Father Boissin to visit a few of the surrounding posts. He did not set out for Lake Pelican until the eleventh of February.

On the 27th of the same month he started on a trip to Prince Albert to interview Bishop Pascal concerning the Cross Lake Foundation which project neither of them had abandoned. He travelled by way of La Ronge Lake so as to visit the few Catholics who lived there in passing. His detour added to the fatigues of his journey all the more because the snows had begun to melt. He arrived in Prince Albert eight days later, and there he discussed the whole situation with his Bishop. It was decided that he should go to Cross Lake in the early spring and found the long projected mission there. Everything had been settled and the decision made, when they learned that Cross Lake was in the diocese of St. Boniface, and that Archbishop Langevin had reserved the foundation of a mission there to himself. It was done in the following autumn. (*O.M.I. Missions*, 1912.)

Although he was a little disappointed at the turn of affairs, Father Charlebois cordially accepted the new trial that God had sent him, and went back to Lake Pelican where he once more commenced his building labors on the new church. No sooner had April arrived than he with Father Rossignol and two men went into the forest. "There," Father Rossignol tells us, "we erected a tent and set ourselves to rough-hew our lumber. It was a question of squaring four hundred pieces of timber, the greater part of which were twelve feet long and planed only on two sides. There were besides fifty pieces for rafters, which had to be planed on four sides and these were from sixteen to twenty feet long. In addition to these there were ten pieces of

red spruce which had to be planed on four sides and these were forty feet long.

"We rose at four o'clock and said our masses under the tent, breakfasted upon pike, and by six o'clock the strokes of the hatchet resounded among the fir-trees. Two men felled the trees, Father Charlebois squared them. They had cut enough in sixteen days. But the snow was melting and we had to spend the last three nights in transporting the logs to the lake shore with the help of a pony. Father Charlebois drove him for twelve hours, and I drove him the other twelve. When the ice went out we transported these four hundred logs to the mission in our little barge. We had to make several trips." (Letter from Fr. Rossignol).

Meanwhile it had become necessary to think about providing for the missions. This necessitated a long trip to Prince Albert where the Lake Pelican Missionary met his brother, Father Charles Charlebois, O.M.I., who was then returning to the East after three years of service in Alberta. This meeting was very sweet for the two brothers, particularly so for Father Ovide who was generally so cut off, and so much deprived of family joys.

When the purchases for the missions were made they loaded their goods upon a newly built lighter, and the two brothers went down the Cumberland together. They had to separate after a few days, Father Charles going down the Saskatchewan to Grand Rapids. After a brief stay of a few days at that Mission he embarked on a steamboat for the crossing of Lake Winnipeg on his way to St. Boniface. Father Ovide continued his way to Lake Pelican where he arrived at the end of June.

Immediately upon his arrival he sent Father Rossignol to Cumberland to replace Father Boissin then set out on a round trip of the Missions by way of Grand Rapids, Cross Lake, Nelson-House, and Pakitawagan. He himself had undertaken to preach a retreat to the Indians. Meanwhile he set to work to erect the frame of the new church the materials for which he had collected in the spring. The measurements for this church called for a frame sixty feet long and thirty-five wide, and the only help he had for this work was furnished by one man. Nevertheless the church was erected and roofed by the beginning of August. It was all that was possible for that year.

While laboring thus, both for the temporal and spiritual needs of his mission, he wrote to his brother, Father Charles, on July 1, as follows: "I am entirely alone now. I had a little Indian with me but I have sent him away, for he hindered me more than he helped. In consequence I am my own cook; that is my worst nightmare. I assure you that I reduce my cooking to a minimum. At this season I eat salad and pemican that Father Gasté left me as he passed through. It is always ready so that my kitchen stove is often cold for three days at a time."

Fortunately Father Charlebois had an excellent stomach. Wanting that, we cannot see how he could have accustomed himself to such a regime, especially when we consider the excessive manual labors to which he subjected himself.

He was then in need of lime for the making of plaster and whitewash for the future church. In September he took a single companion to a spot about a dozen miles from the mission where there was quicklime in abundance. He cut a dozen cords of wood with which to burn the lime during the following winter.

In October he went to Grand Rapids where he spent over a month, "taking a rest," as he wrote to his brothers, Fathers William and Charles Charlebois. This rest was only relative, for his days were spent in instructing his flock both children and grown-ups. He did not leave Grand Rapids until the ice had formed. Then, passing through Le Pas, he stayed there for a few days and arrived at Cumberland on November 22. He was back again at Lake Pelican on December 5, where he stayed for the rest of that year.

He made the ordinary tour of his missions in January 1902. On his return the indomitable priest went to work at planing and grooving the planks they had sawed in the autumn. That finished, he returned to the place where he had cut the wood for the burning of the lime. Aided by only one man, he dug out an oven and filled it with quicklime. This occupied them four days. Then he dismissed his assistant, lighted his fire and kept it going all by himself for eight days and eight nights. Thus he made four tons of whitening that they transported to the mission by barge when the spring came.

After finishing that work, he took three men with him to cut some small fir-trees which he squared on two sides for the

lath-work of the church walls. They soon had five thousand laths cut and squared, and the priest nailed them upon the walls of the new building, both inside and outside.

He was obliged to interrupt his work again at the beginning of July, for he had to go and meet Bishop Pascal. His Excellency arrived from Prince Albert, accompanied by Father Ancel, then returning to Reindeer Lake, and also by Brother Pioger, and Brother Arthur Lajeunesse, O.M.I., then a scholastic, a nephew of Father Charlebois. This last named Brother was to finish his studies in the West, near his uncle, on account of his health.

When Father Charlebois arrived in Cumberland on July 12, the party had already arrived there. They left all together on July 16, for St. Joseph's was almost completely submerged. They reached Lake Pelican on the 20th, Bishop Pascal only passing through on his way to Reindeer Lake. On his return he had arranged to administer Confirmation at Lake Pelican, and bless the new church.


But, in order to be blessed, the church had first to be finished and the flooring was not in, the walls were not plastered; the arch, communion railing, wainscoting, were not yet made; and as the Indians had already arrived it was necessary to open their retreat. The undaunted missionary was not in the least discouraged by this terrifying task. With the help of Father Rossignol and Brother Lajeunesse, he set to work at the spiritual and material task before him. Brother Lajeunesse gives us their time table. Father Charlebois rose at four o'clock, recited his breviary Matins, Lauds, and the Little Hours. At five he roused the community. Prayers and meditation followed. Then he offered his Mass. Father Rossignol followed him, the Indians assisted at it, and Father Charlebois preached a sermon in their language. They breakfasted upon oatmeal at seven o'clock, and went to work immediately until noon. The particular examination came before dinner, after it they took a ten minute siesta, and went back to work until six o'clock when they took supper. After that there was another sermon which lasted for an hour, rosary, and night prayers, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Vespers and Compline, after which Father Charlebois prepared his sermon for the following day.

Their ordinary fare was not complicated. They had oatmeal in the morning, boiled fish at noon, and fish boiled for the sake of variety at supper. They had in addition a small reserve of dried elk meat which the Fathers reserved strictly for great feasts. It happened that Brother Lajeunesse had been appointed cook to the community one Sunday. He undertook to cook some of this dried meat so that they might have a good dinner. It was impossible to find it at first. In the place indicated he found only several pieces of old skin which was quite black and covered with dust. The idea that they might eat the stuff occurred to him. They tried to reassure him by telling him that it was excellent in order to induce him to put it into the saucepan. He scarcely touched it at dinner. He found this kind of meat unappetizing, and as there was not much of it the two Fathers stinted themselves, each trying to arrange that the other should have more. Not quite half of it remained at the end of the meal, and the Fathers were hoping to have it for supper. But as soon as the repast was over Brother Arthur found the best way of disposing of it was to feed to the dogs the remains of the unfortunate dried meat. So supper brought frustrated hopes to the two priests, and the sort of compliments one would expect to the unfortunate cook.

By means of this orderly system everything was ready by the time of Bishop Pascal's return. The flooring was down, the arch finished and decorated by three rose windows, the walls were plastered and whitened both inside and outside, the communion railing was in place and a breast-high pannelling lined the walls of the church all around.

Father Charlebois had done two thirds of all the work with his own hands, in the actual construction as well as in the preparation. He was then at the height of his strength, and no workman in the country round could match him with hatchet, or hammer, nor in another kind of work or on the oar. (Letter from Fr. Rossignol to Bishop Lajeunesse).

This is the place in which to say a word about a project that was very close to the heart of the good priest, especially so since his return from the East. This was the establishment of a boarding school for the young Indians in Cumberland. He had had an Indian school there for several years, but in addition to the difficulty of finding competent teachers, which was no





slight one, this kind of school is not so practical among uncivilized people, the great majority of whom live at too great a distance to be able to send their children to them. Even those who have settled in the vicinity of the school can only send them from time to time, not regularly, because of their continual migrations for the purpose of hunting or fishing. For these children to receive a solid instruction and a true education they must be separated from their parents by remaining at a boarding school.

Besides his wish to bring instruction to these children, Father Charlebois had another motive for the establishment of a boarding school in the misery among which these little ones dwelt, especially the orphans, since the floods had covered so large a section of the country. He tried to interest his relations and friends of Lower Canada in the fate of these children. The "Work of Old Linen" and used clothing which he strove to establish there had enabled him to assist the most needy among them every year, and he showed himself as grateful for that help as though he himself had been the beneficiary. On October 6, 1899, he wrote in his journal: "I spent two days there (at Le Pas), entirely occupied with the spiritual and temporal welfare of these poor Indians. I say poor, because Le Pas is the birthplace of poverty. The sight of so much misery and nakedness pierces the heart. This time I had the consolation of distributing old linen brought from Canada. It was pleasant to see their joy at the sight of these gifts. Oh, thank you! thank you! generous donors, in the name of my Indians, and in my own." (*Journal*, 1899.)

But though a few clothes helped to a certain extent in keeping the poor little ones from the cold, it did not protect them from hunger. A boarding school would procure for them both shelter and food.

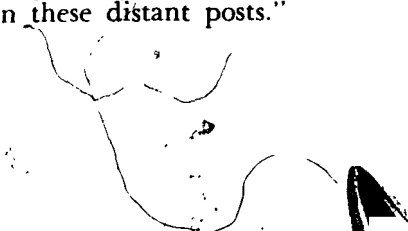
It would be necessary to secure Government aid for the establishment and upkeep of such a school; that would be indispensable, for the slender resources of the mission could not reach it. Father Charlebois strove by every means in his power to obtain this help. In his correspondence with his brother, Father Charles, we see that he had commissioned him to plead his cause with the authorities in Ottawa. In the same way he urged Bishop Pascal to act with the same authorities, and when the

Bishop passed through in 1902 he had some long conversations with him on this subject. But in spite of their overtures, all that they could obtain from the Government were polite acknowledgements and vague promises to do something about it in a very remote future. They had to wait until the Cumberland Missionary himself became a bishop before they could obtain the erection of a boarding school in the district.

After the blessing of the church at Lake Pelican, Father Charlebois and Brother A. Lajeunesse left Father Rossignol at St. Gertrude's Mission, and accompanied Bishop Pascal to Cumberland. It was the end of August 1902. Brother Lajeunesse remained in Cumberland to keep Father Boissin company, and teach a class of children until a master could be found for the school. Father Charlebois accompanied the Bishop to Le Pas and Grand Rapids for the canonical visitation and confirmation. On the Bishop's departure for Winnipeg he spent some time at the Grand Rapids Mission, where he began the building of a church forty feet long and twenty-five feet wide that he was to finish in the following year. He returned to Lake Pelican at the beginning of October, for Father Rossignol had fallen ill.

Meanwhile the old building which had been raised by Father Paquette in 1877 and was still used as a residence by the missionaries, fell into ruins and was urgently in need of replacement; Father Charlebois therefore left Lake Pelican once more at the end of December, arriving at Cumberland toward ten o'clock at night half dead from cold and weariness. During the last day of this trip he had covered forty-five miles, running behind the dogs in a heavy snow storm. But he lost no time for all that. On January 2, he sent Father Boissin to visit the Grand Rapids Mission while he himself set to work to prepare for the new building.

Father Boissin was evangelizing the people at Grand Rapids. He passed five weeks among them and returned home well satisfied. But his report suggests that there, as at Nelson-House, there should be a resident priest, or at least more frequent and longer visits in order to strengthen the new converts against the traps of Protestant ministers who never cease from trying to draw them back into heresy. "Under the present conditions," he wrote, "one cannot do very much in these distant posts."



The missionaries indeed saw clearly what should have been done, but their small numbers, and want of material means prevented them from realizing it.

But it was at least some consolation for the missionaries to learn that there was now a regular resident priest at Cross Lake. Father Bonald who had been transferred to the Manitoba Province had been sent there by his provincial.

Father Charlebois and Brother Arthur Lajeunesse were occupied, with a few men to assist them, in cutting logs for the future building. The work advanced rapidly as it always did, Father doing more than his share. All the squared logs were delivered at the mission at the beginning of March.

After all this manual labor Father Charlebois went to exercise his ministry in the villages and camps around Pakitawagan, which was the last post he visited, whence he returned to Lake Pelican. But he had two buildings under construction, the chapel at Grand Rapids which he had begun the previous autumn, and the new residence at Cumberland. Between the two there was not much promise of rest for him during the coming summer. Therefore he did not stay long at St. Gertrude's Mission. In fact we read in *The Cumberland Chronicle* of May 15: "Father Charlebois and Brother Welsh gave us a pleasant surprise by coming from Lake Pelican in the afternoon. They had travelled partly in a canoe, partly in a dog train, but more frequently in St. Francis' carriage, and through water up to their waists. It was truly an apostolic journey with a whole cortege of fatigues and sufferings."

Our architect did not remain idle on his return to Cumberland. Aided by Brothers Lajeunesse and Welsh, he went to work during the last days of May, to build and fill an oven destined to burn the quicklime which will be needed for the new house. "In three days," says the *Chronicle*, "the three of them did as much work as ten ordinary men should have accomplished."

While Brothers Lajeunesse and Welsh were burning the quicklime in the oven which they had built. Father Charlebois went to Prince Albert to buy provisions for his missions. On his return he went down to Grand Rapids with Brother Welsh, to finish the chapel begun there the previous year.

They were back in Cumberland on July 16, and they then began work immediately on the building for the Cumberland Mission residence. The cellar had already been dug, when the mail came from Prince Albert, bringing to Father Charlebois his obedience for Duck Lake. He was thus obliged to leave the care of the construction of the new house to Father Boissin.

---



## Opaskwéyak

Mitatat tepakup osap é  
akimit notchihituwipisim.

Ni totem,

Ni ki miwéyitten ka ki pé  
masinahamawiyan. Nista ni ki  
mitaten éka é wapamitan Paki-  
tawaganik, ni ki mamaskaten é  
notépayian; maka ékwa ni  
kiskéyitten kékway otohi.

Kéchinatch mistahi ki ma-  
wikataw kisim Cornélius nista  
mina ni mitataw tchikéma kwé-  
yask ki pimatisiw mina kwé-  
yask ki apatisiw ayamihawinik;  
maka wiya maskutch nama-  
wiya mitatam é ki nakatak  
askiy tchikéma Manitonak  
ayaw nitéyimaw.

Ni miwéyitten é pétaman  
kéyapitch kwéyask kanawéyi-  
misuyan. Awahé! Awahé! At-  
chipiko kwéyask kanawéyimisú  
kista nanikutita ki ka miwé-  
yitten natatchi ki Manitom. Ki  
kitimakisin anotch mékwatch;  
maka patima ki ka wéyotisin  
kisikok ayayani. Sépéyitta at-  
chipiko.

Kéyapitch ki ka ayamihesta-  
matin kita witchéwikowisiyan.

Ekwané éyikok, pitatamiska-  
tin mina ki sawéyimitinawaw  
qiya mina kitanis tchi miyo  
**ayayak.**

Niya Kitchiyamihéwikimaw.

## Translation of the Letter

Le Pas, September 17.

My Sister:

I was pleased with what  
you wrote to me; I also re-  
gretted not seeing you at  
Pakitawagan. I was surprised  
by your absence. Now I un-  
derstand.

You are quite right in  
weeping for your brother Cor-  
nelius, and I sympathize with  
you, for he was good and  
rendered great services to the  
Faith. But perhaps he does  
not regret leaving this earth  
since, as I believe, he is with  
God.

I am happy to hear that  
you are still a good Christian.  
Courage! courage! you also  
will be happy one day when  
you go to the good God. Now  
you are suffering, but later  
on, when you are in Heaven,  
you will be filled with happi-  
ness. Be patient to the end. I  
will pray for you again that  
God will help you. That is all.

I salute you, and bless you  
and your daughter so that all  
may go well with you.

I, the Bishop

(Tre Great Prayer Chief).





## CHAPTER IV

### St. Michael's School (1903-1910)

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When Bishop Pascal's letter naming him director of the Duck Lake School reached Father Charlebois, he was right in the midst of the Cumberland Mission building. It was a hard blow for him and his assistants.

He was forced to abandon the missions for which he had spent himself for over fifteen years, and go to preside over a completely new kind of work, one that his timidity and humility made him consider beyond his powers. He allowed his tears to flow freely when he received this obedience.

All those who had worked with him felt the same way about it. Just at first they felt themselves under a cloud of discouragement. A unanimous cry of protest went out from all the Western Missions. "What," they said, "we are already too few! We beg for help and instead of sending it, they take the most capable and active one away from us to make him a school Principal."

These complaints were well founded humanly speaking, but in making them they forgot that God's views are not always those of human wisdom, that the Divine Will is heard in the voice of superiors, and not by the recriminations of subjects. This appointment which then seemed an almost irreparable misfortune for the Indian missions, was to become in fact their greatest good.

Father Charlebois needed some formation for the work Providence had destined for him. He had become an expert in the work of the Indian missions, but in the position in which God intended placing him, he would no longer be exclusively occupied with the evangelization of the natives, he would have to deal with civil and ecclesiastical authorities;





he would have business with every kind of men; he would no longer have to obey only, but he would have to give orders, and to direct. His natural timidity would give him great difficulty in all that.

This timidity which was almost shyness, was what struck those who met him for the first time. A Presentation Sister who was at St. Michael's School at the time when Father Charlebois came to take its direction, wrote of him: "It was evident that he suffered from having left his dear Indians, and he was rather sad. He had just made a great sacrifice. What struck one on meeting him for the first time was a kind of shyness, a timidity that might give him an appearance of coldness. But he was far from that."

One of his nieces, who was herself a Presentation Sister, wrote of her uncle: "Uncle Ovide as he appeared to me about 1898, was a timid and apprehensive religious who naturally froze up his circle. We knew that he was kind, Mother had told us so, but we did not feel drawn to him."

As director of the Duck Lake School he was to be in frequent communication with the government authorities; he would receive visits from every kind of more or less distinguished personages. All these conditions would oblige him to have more confidence in himself, and to overcome the timidity that hindered the use of his talents, when he found himself associated with men with whom he was not well acquainted.

But more of this condition came to him when he was called soon after into Bishop Pascal's council; and then into that of the Oblate Province of Alberta-Saskatchewan. These appointments were to initiate him into the administration of a diocese and the direction of a religious congregation. In a word, Providence had sent him to Duck Lake for his episcopal novitiate. But nobody suspected that, in 1903, he himself less than anyone.

It took all his spirit of faith and submission to the will of God, which he had always seen manifested in the voice of superiors, to enable him to accept this charge of which he believed himself to be so incapable. "I am so ignorant!" he wrote to his brother William. He always said that he was ignorant, and he believed it. But his ignorance was akin to that of the Curé d'Ars and Bishop Grandin, who spoke of

themselves as ignorant to anyone who would listen to them, but in truth they were only more advanced in the knowledge of the things of God and the direction of souls, much more so than some doctors *in utroque jure*. It was so with Father Charlebois who in spite of his overwhelming labors had never neglected the study of theology, which his common sense and practical disposition enabled him to apply in the most seasonable fashion.

In spite, then, of his fears and repugnances, he accepted the charge imposed upon him, and succeeded in it perfectly, as one ordinarily succeeds in any position one has not sought but which obedience has imposed, provided it is accepted frankly and with a good will, but also without vanity. Because, in the first place the superiors see the qualifications of a subordinate better than he does himself, and in the second place because under these conditions God works with him, and supplies for any possible insufficiency of his. It is, on the contrary, rare to find one succeeding in a position that he has sought, one of which he judged himself to be more capable than others, and above all if he has intrigued to obtain it, because in that case it is not certain whether the voice of the superior is really the voice of God or an echo of the presumptuous will of the subject. And then God leaves a man in the hands of his own powerless vanity. Happy is he if he sees this in time.

The position assigned to Father Charlebois was no sinecure. The school was well established from a material point of view, but it carried the burden of an enormous debt, twenty thousand dollars, for which he had to pay interest at a high rate. Worse still, there was room for improvement in the discipline of the school.

The new director's first undertaking was to establish discipline among the pupils, and imbue them with a truly Christian spirit. So he went to work with his accustomed apostolic diligence, bringing to these young souls the same love that he had for his poor Indians at Lake Pelican and at Cumberland. It was not long before the effects of his zeal became apparent, in a little while a new spirit reigned in the house.

The good Presentation Sisters from St. Hyacinth strongly aided him in this work of Christian education. With the devotedness of which they give proof in every one of their

establishments they busied themselves with classes, the kitchen, linen-room, infirmary, and the rest. They also taught the young Indian girls who boarded at the school the arts of sewing and housekeeping.

A farm of several hundred acres was attached to the school. This permitted the boys who had arrived at a certain age to learn all that belongs to the cultivation of a farm, the care of stables, the garden, etc., under the direction of fairly competent farmers and farm workers. A practical method served to interest the children in this work, a method which, continued and perfected by Father Delmas, O.M.I., who succeeded Father Charlebois as head of the school, made the Indian School of Duck Lake a model for this kind of schools throughout the West. The pupils coming from that school who are settled chiefly in the reservations of Duck Lake and Maskey Lake are reckoned among the best agriculturists in that country.

But Father Charlebois' greatest anxiety was the big debt that he must pay. It is easy to imagine his fear of the debt of \$20,000, he who had come from the Northern Missions where they lived upon privations, where they had to look at it twice before spending 25c, where they had no coffee, no sugar, nor even bread and salt, because the transportation charges for these provisions were too high and their carriage too difficult.

Until this time Father Charlebois had accomplished a great deal with nothing in regard to the material establishment of the missions, as we see in reading the last two chapters. But in order to do that he had had only to use his own talents as an architect, and exert his own muscular strength. Here he found himself facing less than nothing, his talents were almost useless to him. He had to exert his administrative talent, which he so far had had no occasion to use except upon a very small scale. From now on it must be exerted in a larger way.

He began to work very courageously by abolishing every unnecessary expense, reducing the personnel, and himself performing the duties of the discharged workmen. He took charge of the heating in winter, rose regularly at four o'clock so as to warm the house before the rising of the community. In summer he busied himself in the garden, with the help of the biggest boys. He did the hardest work himself at all times.

As at Lake Pelican he continued to perform his spiritual exercises in the morning before the community rose, and at night after they had gone to rest. "Sometimes", a good Presentation Sister who is now at Le Pas, tells us, "we would see a light in his room until eleven o'clock, or midnight. And when we said: "Father you were up late last night", he would reply, "I must perform my spiritual exercises", for, however exhausting his work might be, the idea of omitting one of them never occurred to him.

By economising in this way he almost paid the interest upon the debt out of the income of the school. But the debt itself still remained the same and in case of a bad year, or accident, it would be necessary to add to it. Therefore he had recourse to his benefactors; he became a beggar in spite of the repugnance his natural shyness and reserve caused him to feel in this matter.

Fortunately there was an old retired missionary at the school just then, Father Lecorre, O.M.I. He had had a vast correspondence in his time with benefactors of the missions of the far North, and he had continued to correspond with several of them still. He put these old benefactors in touch with Father Charlebois and it was not long before he had interested them in the work. Several of them went so far as to make him known to their neighbors, and pointed out the Father to other more fortunate people who they believed would be disposed to help him. Assistance began to come in, sometimes in considerable amounts, but for the greater part it was usually in small sums of one or a few dollars. Thanks to these gifts Father Charlebois was able to take care of his most urgent obligations, and began to reduce the debt. "There were painful moments for all that", says the religious already quoted, "when it seemed as though means to satisfy these urgent obligations were about to fail. But when the moment of need arrived help always came."

So well did the work go that at the end of seven years, when Father Charlebois was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin, the debt was entirely wiped out without neither the direction nor the administration of the school ever having had to suffer.

This had demanded a voluminous correspondence which added considerably to the work of the director of the school. He often had to answer from forty to fifty letters a day. He experienced such a sense of gratitude toward all who had been willing to help him in his work, that he could not pass over the least gift without thanking the donor. In fact it was the smallest alms; that of one or two dollars, which excited his gratitude the most, "because," as he often said, "they are ordinarily the widow's mites of the Gospel, not taken from the superfluous but from their necessities."

This crushing burden of correspondence never caused him to neglect any one of his duties as director of the school where he had to overlook everything, both material and spiritual. In addition to the duties of fireman and head gardener which he had undertaken, he had to oversee the supplies in food, clothing and repairs, the direction of works by hired men and laborers upon the farm and around the house, with the direction of the religious and their pupils. Added to these duties he had to receive more or less important people, above all the Indians, who were strongly inclined to look upon Father Charlebois as their own property to be used, or abused, at pleasure. They did not stint themselves of this pleasure; there were endless visits every day. It was sometimes the parents of the children, sometimes neighbors from surrounding reservations whose spiritual needs were part of Father Charlebois' task. Every day he gave a half hour catechism lesson in the Cree language for the younger children. The Sisters taught the big ones their religion in English, but the half hour of catechism he gave them each week in their own tongue prevented them from forgetting it. It also made them understand the truths of religion better, for their native tongue by itself made them almost unintelligible.

In addition to the care of the school there were two Indian reservations belonging to the school whose religious needs had to be taken care of by him. These reservations were at Duck Lake and at Batoche. Knowing him as we do, we can easily see that this part of his missionary work was not the least interesting to him. But unfortunately the Indians on both of these reserves were of the least interesting kind, either hardened pagans or baptized persons without instruction or religious


habits, brutalized by drunkenness, corrupted by their traffic with the white, lazy and hypocritical. Such were, in general, their leading characteristics.

But in spite of these difficulties the zealous missionary set to work courageously at the work of christianizing these degraded beings. He tried to win them by kindness and fair dealing; had recourse once more to his benefactors to obtain the clothing of which these poor ragged beings are always in need; he gave them food when they came to the school with cries of famine, and that happened nearly every day; he sent remedies and nourishments for the sick, etc. The sister in charge of the kitchen who is one of our informants, protested that it was waste, but the missionary replied: "Sister, we must economize upon something else, but not upon charity".

But his pity was above all given to the orphans, always so miserable among pagan Indians. He gathered them into the school often long before they were old enough to be enrolled upon the government lists. "One evening", an old Sister relates, "he had been to administer the last sacraments to a dying man upon the Batoche Reservation. It was a fairly long distance away and the weather was very cold. He came back fairly late in the evening all covered with hoar frost and holding a big bundle under his cloak. Sending for the Sister who was in charge of the little boys, he said: "See, Sister, here is a present for you", and he drew from under his cloak a little Indian boy from three to four years of age, wrapped in a rag of blanket so soiled that it was impossible to discover its original color. The poor child himself was dirty and covered with vermin, his feet were bare, and the rest of his body about the same. He was the son of the dying man, and Father Charlebois had adopted him in the name of the school.

We might multiply incidents of this kind if the limitations of this book would permit. Father Charlebois had already collected several orphans upon his trips, while at Cumberland and Lake Pelican, but we did not mention them for lack of space.

It was not only the Indians who experienced the effects of his charity. All religious and priests either regular or secular who passed through Duck Lake were sure of food and shelter



at St. Michael's School. There they always found help, sympathy and counsel, both temporal and spiritual. And that was the most precious help for those newly arrived in the country who knew neither the inhabitants nor conditions.

But the most favored beneficiaries of his hospitality were the missionaries from the North when they visited at St. Michael's School. "These poor Fathers deserve pity; try to take good care of them", he would say, to the Sisters in the kitchen, and when they went away he always made them some kind of gift, meat, butter, fat, or any other kind of provisions of which he knew their mission to be especially in need.

His successor kept up this hospitable and charitable tradition so that one might say that St. Michael's School is still a real oasis for every priest or religious who passes through Duck Lake or its neighborhood, for one willingly turns a little out of the way to enjoy Father Delmas' hospitality.

It was thanks to his inexhaustable charity that Father Charlebois succeeded in winning some of the souls who constituted his flock. Sometimes it was an old pagan who consented to receive baptism before dying, again it was a Protestant who was converted, or it might be a strayed Catholic who returned to the practice of his religious duties. But things went slowly, and he depended chiefly upon the children who would come from the school for the regeneration of these reservations. That was why he strove more and more to imbue them with love for their religion, and form them to the practices of the Christian life. The outcome showed that he was right. The spirit of these reservations is greatly changed for the good.

In order to succeed in this work the pious missionary put his trust in God. From the day of his arrival at St. Michael's School he hastened to establish the work of the Apostleship of Prayer and devotion to the Sacred Heart with the practice of the First Friday Communion. He strove to plant these devotions not only in the pupils of the school but also in the Indians upon the reservations, especially in those who had been pupils at the school. The efficacy of the First Friday Communion was demonstrated in an almost miraculous manner on the occasion of a sad event that occurred at the Duck Lake Reservation.

We have already learned that the Indians in that reservation were brutalized by drunkenness. It was not that they were more inclined to this vice than the rest of their countrymen, but, living among the white they could the more easily procure the "fire water". No doubt because it is more prejudicial to him than to the white, the Indian's depraved instinct inclines him almost irresistably to the unfortunate liquor. And this to such a point that having but once tasted it he needs a strength of will, that is generally lacking to him, to avoid it in the future. Even good Catholics find this temptation difficult to resist. "Why do you brutalize yourself with drink?" I asked one of them "if you do not wish to abstain altogether, be contented with a little drop from time to time without going and making yourself drunk like an animal without reason." "Listen, Father", he replied, "when I see a bottle I must taste it; and when I have tasted it, I must get to the bottom of it. The only remedy is to fly from it first of all, but it is not often that I have courage for that."

So we see that those who furnish drink to the Indians are far more culpable than the Indians themselves. The civil law absolutely forbids the doing of it, but it is so easy to violate the law that for a miserable gain many men are not afraid to supply them with this poison. More still, there are drugs with an alcohol base on sale in every store and the Indian can get these as easily as the white. Pain-killer, ginger, etc., are all stronger in alcoholic content than the ordinary liquors and the worst of them all in florida water, a veritable poison.

In the beginning of May 1906 ten Indians on the Duck Lake Reservation organized a florida water drinking party. Four of them who swallowed only a small dose were very sick, but six of them died of it. One of the six, a former pupil of the school, had made his ninth First Friday Communion a few days before, and in order to do it he had come a long way in very bad weather. Witnesses said that he had taken a larger dose of the poison than any of the others. He fell into a coma like his five companions who awoke only in eternity. After remaining in that condition for a long while he completely recovered consciousness, which it appears never happens in these cases. He sent for Father Charlebois, made his confession



and received the last sacraments piously, then he died peacefully. We all looked upon this prodigy as due to the promise made to St. Margaret Mary, by our Lord, that no one who received Communion on nine consecutive First Fridays should die in mortal sin.

A great sorrow came to prove Father Charlebois in April 1905 when he received word of the death of his aged father. Considering the sickness and age of the old man he had foreseen this for a long while, but that did not make it any less sorrowful for the Missionary's loving heart.

As a compensation for this suffering God permitted him to contribute to the establishment of a Work that year that was destined to bring much glory to God and His Holy Mother and draw down many graces upon the country. This was the pilgrimage of Our Lady of Lourdes at St. Laurent de Grandin, Saskatchewan.

St. Laurent is situated on the left bank of the Saskatchewan and was formerly the seat of the most important mission in that district. Fifteen years before, the mission had been removed to another spot but a very small statue of the Blessed Virgin which had been the object of the devotions of Father Fourmont and Brother Piquet, had remained in the hollow of a tree where Father Fourmont had placed it, close beside a little spring whose position recalled that of Lourdes. The faithful in the neighborhood continued to visit this spot as a place of pilgrimage. Several extraordinary cures had even been obtained there, among others that of a lady named Nolin, and a lay brother, Brother Guillet, O.M.I. But no regular pilgrimage had been organized up to that time. The old buildings of the mission had either been destroyed or fallen into ruins, anyhow they had completely disappeared. Nothing remained except the little statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. This last was the gift of Mr. Nolin, a thank offering for his wife's cure. It had been placed in a rustic grotto made by Brother Piquet. Pilgrims were numerous, but they came either in small groups or alone.

Things were in this condition in August 1905 when Brother Guillet who had been cured there in 1893, suggested to Father Charlebois the organization of a pilgrimage in concert with the neighboring missionaries and pastors. The pilgrimage took

place on August 15, and people from the whole surrounding neighborhood joined it. Brother Guillet assisted by the bigger boys of the school went before to prepare the grounds for the reception of the pilgrims who arrived from all directions on the designated day. (See Le Chevalier, *St. Laurent de Grandin*. Passim).

We read as follows in the *Chronicle* of St. Michael's School regarding this event. "Despite the rain there were upwards of one hundred and fifty pilgrims. Mass was offered beneath a tent while those present sang and prayed under a torrential rain. Father Krist sang the Mass during which there were thirty Communions. Father Myre preached under an umbrella held over his head by Brother Guillet. Everything was very unpretending, but most devout. People were there from Belle-Vue, Lake Vermillon, Fish-Creek, and Duck Lake. Thus was the start made, and we hope that the pilgrimage may continue." (*Codex*.)

The start did not die down, said Father Le Chevalier. A similar manifestation of devotion was organized each year on the most convenient day around July 16. (*St. Laurent de Grandin*.)

The selected day, July 16, is the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel; it is also the anniversary of the last appearance of our Lady to St. Bernadette. It seems as though that day were acceptable to the Blessed Mother for her glorification at St. Laurent. For various reasons they tried to set another date for the pilgrimage but they never succeeded. (Le Chevalier, *op. cit.*)

The number of pilgrims increased from year to year. Ten years later they might have been counted by thousands. At present we believe that they near ten thousand, if they do not exceed that figure.

Father Charlebois had been suffering from internal pains which he had been neglecting for a long while. They became worse in 1907 and the doctor ordered him back to Montreal for an urgent operation; so he left on July 9 and returned September 2, "very much better," he wrote in the school *Chronicle*.

The following January, at the invitation of Bishop Pascal, he went to Le Pas to negotiate for the sale of the mission land upon which some business men wished to erect a saw-mill. The

negotiations came to a successful conclusion and the land was disposed of for the sum of \$1,200. Father Charlebois acquired twelve town lots to take its place and the present cathedral, the Catholic School and the Convent of the Presentation Sisters were built upon them.

From Le Pas, Father went to visit his old mission at Cumberland where everyone was happy to see him again. On the return trip the guide went astray, in consequence of a snow storm, in the middle of the large lake, and they had to pass the night upon the ice. "It is certainly extraordinary that we were not frozen" wrote the Missionary to one of his nieces. "I said to myself afterward that someone must have been praying for us. On my return from that famous trip I had a bad case of erysipelas which kept me in bed some time. I am better now but to make things even we have several of the children sick. I am watching over two of them, one of whom has no more hope of life. It is three o'clock in the morning. I have been plying this trade for two weeks; I can get only three or four hours of sleep at night and I feel tired. But no matter, I feel so well in practising charity toward these poor little Indians. The one in extremity is as edifying as possible, he does nothing but pray and talk about God. I have to give him Communion every night at half past twelve. If you could only see his devotion in receiving!" (Letter to Sister St. Ovide.)

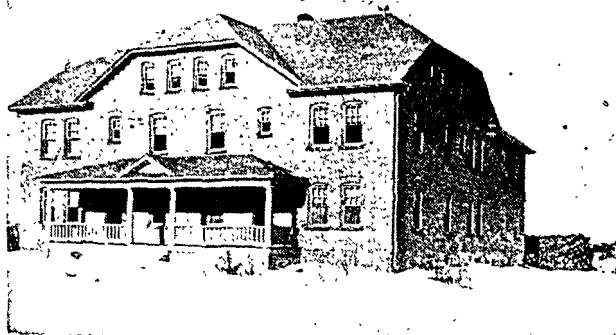
In the June of that year, 1908, in obedience to Father Charlebois' orders, they improved the arrangement of the Blessed Virgin's grotto at St. Laurent, and built a large shed to permit the pilgrims to perform their devotions without so much inconvenience from the sun or rain.

The clergy of St. Albert had long seen the necessity for a French Catholic periodical in the West. For the want of such a publication the French Canadians and half-breeds were coming closer and closer to losing their own language and their religion. Bishop Pascal was very much in favour of this enterprise, but how was he to start this paper with the slender resources at his command?

In spite of all difficulties Father Myre set to work, aided by Father Bourdel and Father Charlebois. A joint-stock subscription of \$25 produced a capital of \$2,000 and with this sum they purchased the stock of a little English local paper that was



General view of Lake  
Pelican Miss or



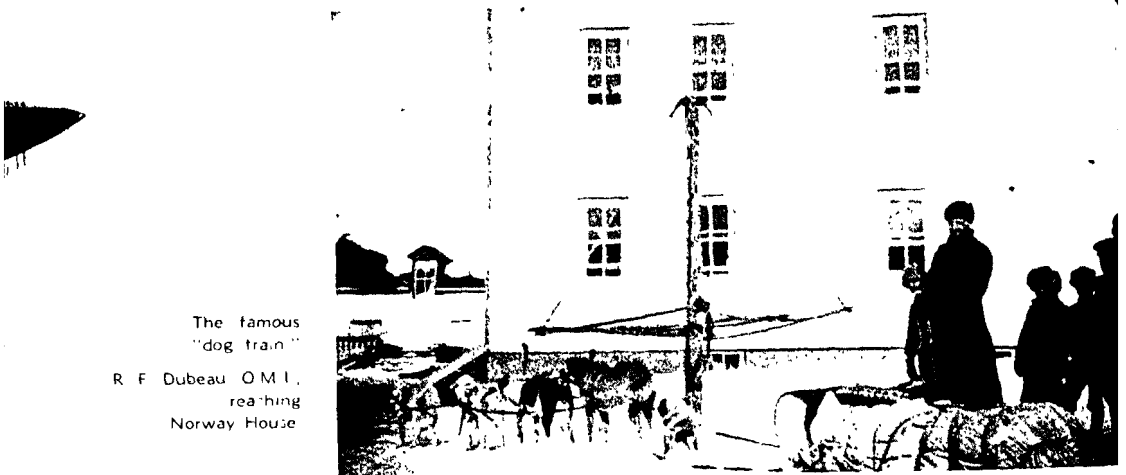
Bishop's House built  
at Le Pas in 1926



A few Cree  
women.



At Sturgeon Landing  
Indians arriving to assist  
at the blessing of Guy  
School (August 1927)



The famous  
"dog train"  
R. F. Dubeau O.M.I.,  
reaching  
Norway House



Indians camping  
at Lake Pelica

failing. They installed the machinery in the old presbytery at Duck Lake, beside St. Michael's School and the first issue of *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* appeared during the course of 1910. The sisters and school-children folded the sheets as fast as they fell from the press: As we see, the first installation was somewhat primitive.

A further difficulty, and one that nearly put an end to everything was the finding of an editor-in-chief. In the course of that autumn Father Auclair, O.M.I., was sent out from the East, and the future of the news paper seemed to be in a fair way to success when a fire which caused the loss of several lives broke out in the evening of November 15, completely destroying the shop and machinery of the paper.

The catastrophe seemed to spell complete ruin for the enterprise. To make matters worse Father Charlebois was no longer there. He had just been nominated Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin and he was in Montreal, preparing for his consecration, at the time of the fire.

"Poor *Patriote!* poor *Patriote!*" he wrote a few days afterward to Father Myre. "What will become of it? That is the great question, a very difficult one to answer. I hope that you will succeed in resuscitating it for it is more than important; it is necessary. Continue your activities. I can no longer do anything myself. I will try to buy some stock later on, but that is the best I can do."

But Fathers Myre, Bourdel and Auclair were not discouraged meanwhile. Aided and stimulated by the new Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin, they bought a house at the entrance of Duck Lake Village with the insurance received for the burned shop and buildings, and installed a new printing office. *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* reappeared.

A little later Bishop Pascal gave it hospitality at Prince Albert in a house adjacent to his episcopal residence. The valiant paper still had many difficulties to overcome, but the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin who had been so instrumental in its beginning continued as much so in its preservation. He probably saved its life upon more than one occasion.

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## PART III

# The Bishop

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### CHAPTER I

#### The Vicariate Apostolic of Keewatin

The whole of the immense tract of country known as the Canadian North West was practically unknown at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, and although it belonged nominally to the diocese of Quebec, no priest had ever yet visited it. In the second half of the Eighteenth Century a few Jesuit missionaries had penetrated as far as the Red River, profiting by the expeditions of La Verendrye, but none of them had gone further than that point, and no settlement had been made.

During the second decade of the Nineteenth Century, Bishop Plessis of Quebec whose jurisdiction then extended as far as the North Pole, acceding to the requests of the Canadian forest rangers and their half-breed descendants, resolved upon sending missionaries into this country which was so mysterious and fear inspiring to the people of Eastern Canada.

He named Father Provencher his vicar general for the North Western Territory in 1818, and the new appointee went as far as the Red River with another priest. Four years later, Father Provencher was consecrated bishop, and nominated coadjutor for the Bishop of Quebec in the aforesaid territories, and soon afterward the North West was erected into a vicariate apostolic which later became first the diocese, and then the archdiocese of St. Boniface.



But the titles Vicar General, Coadjutor, Vicar Apostolic did not give to Bishop Provencher the fellow laborers of whom his need was so absolute, if he were to evangelize the immense territory under his pastoral care. Nor could be obtained these laborers from the diocese of Quebec where the clergy was then scarcely numerous enough to supply for the spiritual needs of the Eastern people. It was out of the question to send priests to the West unless they were entirely willing to go, and mission life in the immense region that was mostly a wilderness was so painful and depressing because of the isolation in which the missionaries were compelled to live, that the firmest wills became discouraged. The few priests whom Bishop Provencher had succeeded in obtaining left the country one after another, just when the time came when they might have begun to be useful. One of them, Father Darvaux, who was the first apostle of Le Pas, and would probably have persevered, was assassinated, during the first years of his service, by Indians who had been hired by a Protestant minister. Among the rest, barely three or four stayed in the West long enough to achieve anything like a serious result. Bishop Provencher, taught by his twenty years of experience, decided that there was no hope of solidly evangelizing the country with the sole collaboration of the secular clergy. It was then that he resolved to seek the assistance of a religious Congregation in which the wills of subjects would be confirmed in devotedness by their vow of obedience, and by their perfect renunciation. He determined to seek this help from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The real evangelization of the West began with the arrival of these missionaries in 1845 in the immense diocese which comprised what now forms the Provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, with the North West Territory, and extended to the North Pole. The extreme North of this territory was detached from the Diocese of St. Boniface in 1862, and under the name of Vicariate Apostolic of Arthabaska-Mackenzie, was confided to the pastoral care of Bishop Faraud, O.M.I. There was still another division in 1868 when all that now forms the Province of Alberta, and the greater part of Saskatchewan, was separated from the Diocese of St. Boniface to form the Diocese of St. Albert. Bishop Grandin received charge of the new diocese which was still enormous; and in 1891 Bishop

Grandin obtained a further partition, which gave all the territory actually situated within the Province of Saskatchewan to the new Diocese of Saskatchewan, which was given to Bishop Pascal, O.M.I. Ten years afterward this vicariate became the Diocese of Prince Albert.

Notwithstanding all these successive divisions, the Indian missions of the North West were becoming more and more forsaken, almost forgotten as it were, while the great Prairie was becoming peopled, and colonists were coming in from all directions, people of all tongues and every religion. The missionaries who formerly had only Indians to work for, now found themselves pursuing the stray sheep of the House of Israel from every quarter of the globe. The ecclesiastical and religious superiors were overwhelmed by the flood of immigration. Every priest who came to them from Canada was immediately set to work among the Catholic colonists who were more or less at sea, or at least exposed to the danger of losing their faith in the midst of these cohorts of infidels, heretics, and schismatics who formed the majority of the new settlers. Thus they were obliged to neglect the reinforcement of the Northern missionaries who were lost amidst the forests and the ice, and they upon their side became terrified, seeing themselves diminishing both in numbers and in strength, without the aid of anyone, or even being replaced.

Father Pénard, O.M.I., the Saskatchewan delegate to the General Chapter of the Oblates in 1906, was instructed by his constituents to describe the deplorable situation of the Northern missions to the higher superiors of his Congregation, and seek a remedy for them and the missionaries. The exposure of their needs was easy enough; it was not so easy to find a remedy.

After a long and minute scrutiny of the subject, the authorities of the Congregation agreed upon the necessity for a separation, both ecclesiastical and religious, of the Northern from the Southern dioceses and provinces of the Oblates, if they were to provide for the maintenance and development of these missions. This would require the creation of a new vicariate apostolic, by taking the northern part of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, and that of the Diocese of Prince Albert. It was the work of the Congregation of Propaganda; all they

could do was to make the situation known, and ask for the erection of the new vicariate.

These negotiations took place towards the end of Oct. 1906. Three years afterward, in March 1910, the sacred Congregation made the asked for division, and erected the new vicariate with the limits and extent asked for. That was how the first Vicariate Apostolic of Keewatin was created, and named after the Cree name of its central district. This word, signifying *Wind of the North*, does not imply that the temperature there is ordinarily very high.

The creation of this new diocese which would give a superior to the Northern missionaries did not promise much idleness to the one charged with its direction. Out of all the vicariates apostolic then in existence, it was surely that whose administration and provisioning was more difficult than any of them.

At the time of its erection, the new vicariate took in the whole width of the Province of Saskatchewan from the 54th parallel to the high lands which separate the Hudson Bay basin from that of the Arctic Ocean; the entire width of the Province of Manitoba, even to a corner of Ontario, from Parallel 53 to the North Pole. This immense stretch of country is watered by two great rivers, the Churchill and the Nelson. In order to pass from one mission to another it is continually necessary to cross the ranges of hills and mountains that separate the water-sheds of these two rivers, and their tributaries, which makes the roads very rough in the winter, and does not permit of much use of the waterways in the summer, except by the making of numerous portages, each of which is longer and more difficult than the other. As for the sea, unless one is going to the Esquimaux, one cannot travel that way. And there are met such obstacles in the ice of the Hudson Bay that completely substitute for the Nelson and Churchill portages.

Travellers throughout the vicariate in 1910 used the old methods of bark canoes, dog trains and snow-shoes, the details of which we have read in the missionary life of Bishop Charlebois. Only one point was then served by the railroad, Le Pas, where the road from Winnipeg touched it, via Hudson Bay Junction. This road was not pushed through to the Bay until several years afterward.

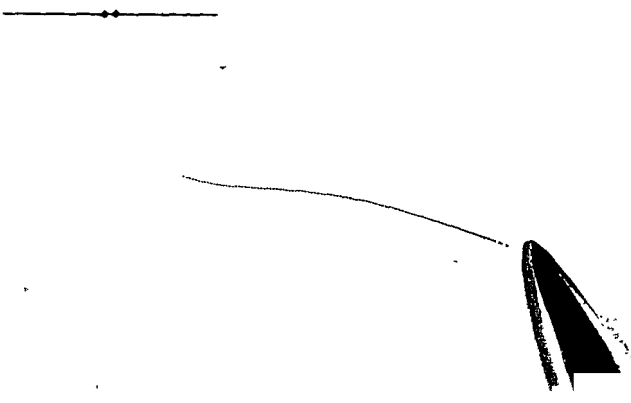
As we have already seen Le Pas was situated about in the middle of the new vicariate, as far as its width is concerned. This little village, mis-named 'town', had been selected for the residence of the Vicar Apostolic. As a matter of fact Le Pas possessed one religious edifice, the log chapel measuring 22 feet by 14 that was built by Father Charlebois in 1897.

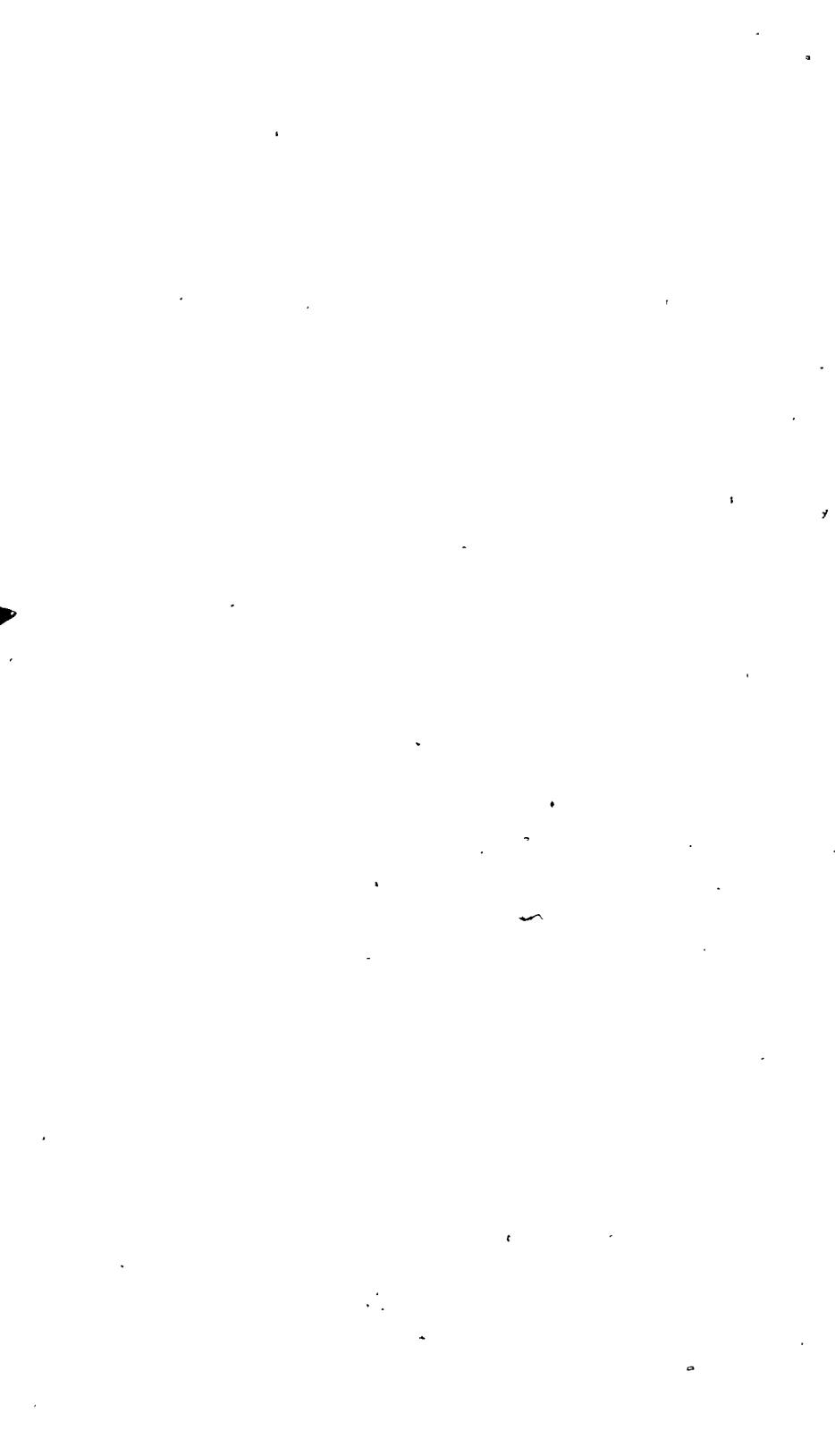
The missions were relatively numerous in the Western part of the vicariate. Ile à la Crosse, Green Lake, Beauval, Portage La Loche, Reindeer Lake, Cumberland, and Lake Pelican. But in the Eastern part there were only two settlements, still in the beginnings, those of Nelson-House and Cross Lake. The whole of this Eastern section, then, remained to be evangelized. The same condition ruled in the West, the number of settlements were very far from sufficing for the needs of the population. And to add to this there were the Esquimaux of Hudson Bay who had as yet never seen a Catholic priest.

To cope with these conditions the new Vicar Apostolic had only a dozen of missionaries, several of whom had already reached old age, and the greater number of whom were prematurely worn out by labors and privations.

Besides these, there were also seven or eight Grey Nuns from Montreal, who kept the Indian School at Beauval, and three or four Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Conception, who travelled back and forth between Norway-House and Cross Lake, not knowing in which mission they would ultimately settle. Such were the worse than precarious conditions under which Bishop Charlebois took possession of the Vicariate of Keewatin.

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## CHAPTER II

### Nomination — Consecration — Inauguration (1910-1911)

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As we saw in the preceding chapter, the Vicariate of Keewatin was erected in March 1910. But it had already been under consideration by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda for some time. It seems that even in the spring of 1910 the question had been decided by Rome, and that the candidates to be presented to the Holy See had already been chosen by the Western Bishops in concert with the religious superiors of the province.

The first name on the list was that of Father Ovide Charlebois. No doubt he had been told about this, and he must have replied with a categorical refusal, if we can judge from a letter dated June 1909 in which his provincial, Father Grandin, rebukes him sharply for his refusal, and shows him that he ought to accept under pain of resisting the will of God, and compromising the future of the missions.

Father Charlebois wrote to his brother Father William, concerning this letter, on June 22 of that same year: "I am sending you a letter from Father Grandin which you will see is eloquent; but for all that it has not yet convinced me. I hope that Rome will be more enlightened, and that they will set me aside. For all that I am ill at ease and as perplexed as possible."

This first intimation does not seem to have disquieted him so very much after all. The very excess of his humility reassured him. He was so thoroughly convinced of his own incapacity that he could not consider his candidature for the episcopacy as serious. So he seems to have lived through the rest of 1909 and the beginning of 1910 in an almost perfect security.

But his security was roughly dispelled in August 1910 when he received a letter from Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface

with an official announcement of his nomination to the Vicariate of Keewatin. The news almost threw him into despair. He wrote to Father William immediately under date of August 25, 1910, and his jerky penmanship showed the agitation of his soul. "I am sending you Archbishop Langevin's letter," he said, "and it is serious. I could not sleep all last night on account of it. What am I to do? What am I to do? Am I going to say 'fiat', or am I going to follow my conscience and say 'I cannot'. This alternative has caused me an indescribable anguish. Seeing one of our children die this evening, I envied his lot."

But with his spirit of faith he was bound to use the same reasoning for himself as he addressed later on to a scholastic who, in spite of the commands of his superiors, felt that he had not the necessary gifts for proceeding to the taking of orders. "It is absurd," he wrote to him, "to maintain that you have neither the knowledge, nor the necessary capacity to fulfill the functions of the priesthood. I am quite sure that you would prejudice your conscience more by refusing, than by accepting. Your acceptance through pure obedience will prove a source of graces and blessings to you. You are not counting enough upon the graces of state. If, like you, I had considered only my own ignorance and incapacity, I would never have accepted the priesthood, and for still stronger reasons the episcopate. I put my confidence in the help of God, and I have no regrets."

Those were the thoughts inspired by faith that decided him to set out for Montreal despite his repugnance. He was to attend first the great Eucharistic Congress to be held there that year, and then prepare himself for the great sacrifice demanded by obedience. But if he had enough virtue to decide in favor of submission, it did not calm his fears and anguish.

As a matter of fact he knew very well that the charge they were about to impose upon him would be a heavy burden, and the work confided to him would be difficult of execution. He knew enough about the country, of which they would make him pastor, to be able to forecast to a great extent the trials which awaited him there. We may add that he actually did suffer all of those foreseen and expected trials during the course of his long and laborious episcopacy, besides many others which he could not foresee, and were even still more painful.

He left Duck Lake on September first. "His emotion when making his farewells to his dear children and the good Sisters who had helped his educational work for seven years, was so deep and heartfelt, that he could scarcely address a few words to us," we read in the annals of the community.

After the Eucharistic Congress, Bishop Charlebois busied himself in the regulation of some affairs concerning his vicariate, and then paid a few visits to some of his benefactors, to thank those who had helped him at Duck Lake, and to beg them to continue their assistance for the new vicariate apostolic.

About November 20 he went into retreat in preparation for his consecration, on St. Andrew's Day, November 30. During this retreat, he represented his unworthiness and incapacity to himself so vividly, that his fear and anguish returned upon him, and that to the point of making him ill. Father Silvain who was then a scholastic at Ottawa where Bishop Charlebois was on retreat, wrote about this as follows: "Reverend Father Superior had told me to pack various articles destined to the missions of Keewatin and I was doing this work in Bishop Charlebois' room, and under his direction. He was then in the midst of his retreat preparatory to the episcopate. One day, when I was working upon those cases, I saw him rise from the desk at which he had been writing. Forgetting my presence, he began to walk back and forth in the room. His hands were joined, his eyes raised to heaven, and he cried, as though a prey to the deepest anguish: 'Not I! not I!—No, no, my God! my God it is impossible.' — I was so much moved that I ran away so as not to weep before his eyes."

The graces of his consecration restored the serenity of his soul. A few days afterward, he wrote to one of his friends: "The sacrifice is at length accomplished. It was painful; it nearly cost me my life. Behold me upon the cross, and for how long? I felt the effect of the good prayers that were offered for me: I felt strong beyond all my hopes. I experienced sweet consolations amid my anguish. Oh! how good God is!" (Letter to Father Myre.)

Bishop Charlebois, promoted by an act of the Holy See under the date of August 8, 1910, to be Bishop of Berenice, and first Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin, was consecrated by his friend and metropolitan, Archbishop Langevin of St. Boni-



face, on November 30 of the same year, in the parish church of Assumption, beside the college where he had made his classical studies. The Assisting Bishops were, Bishop Archambault of Joliette, and Bishop Bernard of St. Hyacinthe.

Father Joseph Dozois, O.M.I., Provincial of the Oblates of the Eastern Province of Canada, preached the sermon for the occasion. After recalling the Christian origin and early aspirations of the newly elected Bishop, the preacher continued:

"Brethren, the Church is never more beautiful than when she is persecuted, for then she is empurpled with the Blood of God. Similarly, a bishop is never greater than when he is suffering. Bishop Charlebois will participate in the greatness of his Crucified Master. He has been prepared for the mission that Heaven gives him to-day, by trials and sacrifices. That is the meaning of the twenty-three years that he has passed among the Indians of the West. In the course of those twenty-three years of apostolic labors, I have not heard that he suffered shipwreck, or that he was beaten with rods like St. Paul, but I know that he has suffered hunger, nakedness, excessive fatigue, and above all, isolation. Those of us who have been privileged to read his edifying correspondence know how deeply the affectionate heart of Father Charlebois has suffered from the solitude in which the youth of his priesthood was spent. Far from his relations, far from his brethren, far from fellow countrymen, he worked with unsurpassable zeal, he suffered like a martyr, he wept like a saint. His work is not done yet. Placed by God at the head of a vicariate that has nothing to offer to human desires, he will go on to Calvary. Go forth, apostle of the Crucified! Your heart is filled with love for God; may it be poured out upon the most abandoned souls. Go forth into the extreme North! Go forth, through Mary! *Ad Jesum per Mariam.*"

The *Semaine Religieuse* of Montreal tells us: The ceremony was stately. Such a function had no doubt never before been seen at Assumption. Three Archbishops, fifteen Bishops, more than three hundred priests, a large number of religious men and women, and an enormous crowd of relations and friends, were there. Bishop Charlebois himself wrote to Father Myre that it was a reproduction in a small way of the Eucharistic Congress that had been held in Montreal a few months before.

Some remarkable addresses were made at the banquet that followed the religious ceremony. Did the proportions of this work permit, it would be both interesting and pleasant to dwell upon them, but we will mention here the discourse of Archbishop Bruchési of Montreal, who stressed the abundant blessings of God upon the Charlebois family, a family which had furnished an almost incalculable number of priests, and religious, men and women. It was from that source that Bishop Charlebois drew his Oblate vocation, that is to say his missionary and episcopal calling, "for every Oblate is a missionary, and many of them become bishops. But to become a bishop one has to travel a long road, and the apostolate is hard. The Western Missionary who today has become a bishop had to learn the language, or rather the languages of the natives to whom he has preached the Gospel for twenty-three years." These last words were loudly applauded. The consecrating prelate, Archbishop Langevin rose in his turn. He cried: "We have just consecrated a modern, and a Catholic Bishop. He will know how to adapt himself to the language and customs of his flock so as to keep them for God. To convert his Indians, and to watch over the faithful he has to preach to them in their own tongue. It has been so in the Catholic Apostolate ever since the gift of tongues. In my diocese the Ruthenians, Poles, Germans, French Canadians, and even the Irish are evangelized in their own languages. Bishop Charlebois will be of the number of those who always put the Faith and its interests before those of nationality or politics, which nevertheless does not prevent a man from being a good patriot."

The new Bishop thanked all those who had taken part in his consecration, and who had assisted at it. He recalled his first meeting with the Consecrator in the Oblate Novitiate at Lachine, at the time when he entered as a postulant. He was taken around there by Brother Langevin, already a novice, and admonisher, that is to say the educator of the new arrivals in everything that concerned the rule and customs of the novitiate. The kindness and virtue of the young novice had made an impression upon the newcomer; he had said to himself: "If the religious life produces such beautiful fruits of kindness and holiness, it is worth embracing." Thanking his Archbishop for all that he had done for him since that first day at Lachine, to

the moment of his consecration, Bishop Charlebois pledged himself to stand beside him in every good fight.

After thanking Canon V. Villeneuve, Superior of Assumption College, for all that he had done for him, and especially in preparing this fine celebration, he ended by saying: "And now, I venture to ask of you all a remembrance in your prayers, for, believe me, when I say that, I am under no illusions. This is a beautiful celebration; it is magnificent; it is a pleasure to be enjoyed; but it will not last long, will it? And afterward? Oh! afterward? I liken this beautiful celebration to a lovely rose, the sight of which rejoices the eye and the heart. But it will die; after a little while it will disappear. Presently it will display a thousand thorns. The anticipation of those thorns makes me ask a little prayer. But in return for that, I will give you a participation in the merits those thorns will procure for me."

These things happened at the Convent of the Sisters of Providence where a festive repast had been prepared for the clergy. At Assumption College, in the building of the old school of agriculture, another repast had been served to the lay members and friends of Bishop Charlebois' family. He was in the midst of them, and there were more speeches there. M. Charlebois, a Quebec notary who was one of his cousins, made him an eloquent address on behalf of all the members of the family, and then, the youthful Martin Lajeunesse, at that time a student at Assumption College, in the name of the new Bishop's numerous nephews and nieces read a nice little address. This Martin Lajeunesse, then twenty-three years of age, was later on to become his uncle's coadjutor and successor. He enlarged upon the supernatural greatness of the dignity with which he had just been invested, assured him that all his nephews and nieces, while respecting him the more, did not love him any less, and that they united their voices to the joyful accents of that beautiful feast, in which all those members who had already left this earth for Heaven were sharing. Then he assured him that they would all continue even more than before, to take him as their model in the path of holiness, devotedness, and sacrifice; even as their parents had recommended to them from their earliest infancy.

As we might suppose, Bishop Charlebois was profoundly touched; he replied by thanking God for the great graces and

blessings that He had been pleased to shower upon his family, where, humble and poor as they were, He had chosen so many priests and religious men and women.

The feast was over. The beautiful rose to which the Bishop had likened it faded quickly, leaving in his hands only its cruel thorns. He knew his vicariate very well, at least its Northern part and the North-Western parts for having travelled over it in every sense of the word. On the day after his consecration we may suppose that it did not appear to him under brilliant colors. He had to create everything. There were a few missions in existence, not one of which, with the exception of the Beauval School, could provide for its own needs; and the meagre allowance from the Propagation of the Faith, which was the only resource of the vicariate was very insufficient for their upkeep. Nearly everywhere the old buildings were falling into ruin and clamoured for renewal. He knew his cathedral at Le Pas, he had built it himself thirteen years before. I was the log house, twenty-two feet by fourteen, of which we have already spoken, and there was not even a shed in addition to it, which might serve for the episcopal palace. Once more he found himself in possession of nothing; a nothing with which he had to lodge himself, rebuild nearly all of his old missions, and create new ones.

But the action of Providence was manifested again in an evident manner in the life of Bishop Charlebois. While imposing upon His faithful servant a task continually becoming more arduous. He had prepared beforehand the means to bring it to a successful issue. We saw that the deplorable financial condition of the Duck Lake School, when he was given charge of it, had forced him to get in touch with the generous Christians, who had aided him with their alms to arrange the affairs of the school. He was about to have recourse to them again, not for the maintenance of a school alone, but in the creation, we may well say, of the whole of an apostolic vicariate of immense extent. The introduction already made, it was easier for him to have recourse to former benefactors than to have addressed them for the first time. Thus in the designs of Providence everything served him, even that big debt that had so much frightened him on his first arrival at Duck Lake. So he went to call upon the benefactors of St Michael's School,

which no longer needed their help. He thanked them warmly for all they had done for it, and then he begged them to come to his assistance in this new painful position in which he was placed. He asked those who were not able to give him material assistance, for the succour of their prayers. And his spirit of faith made him rely far more upon this supernatural aid than upon material gifts.

His confidence was not betrayed. He gathered enough money to begin the building of a house for himself at Le Pas, and for a provisional cathedral, both very poor in fact, but a trifle less miserable than the little primitive chapel. These first supplies were exhausted before the work was half accomplished, but Providence always found him some generous souls who in times of necessity furnished him with the help he needed, through the whole of his long episcopate. He created magnificent works with nothing ahead of him, and in doing this he had to face terrific trials from which he always emerged, thanks to the loving care of Providence, Who always managed some consolations and help for him alongside those trials, by exciting the generosity of benefactors in proportion to his increasing needs.

His heart was broken with gratitude, first to God Who came to his help, but also to those who came to the help of his apostolic work. He never could find words sufficiently eloquent in which to exalt their generosity.

But it was not only material resources that were wanting to him. He needed also missionaries to go out and reinforce the little band of worn out men awaiting him in Keewatin. He needed them immediately, to help him in the administration of the vicariate, for he could not withdraw anyone from the missions where they were already too few. They gave him only two old missionaries, one of them had worn himself out on the Mackenzie Mission, and the other, who was in a still worse condition, in that of James Bay. He was actually in hospital, and they did not know how much longer he might be there. No further reinforcement appeared to be likely for some time to come.

The position was assuredly painful for him, but he was not discouraged by it. While pleading for material help, he also asked for vocations, and it was he who was the cause of the entry



An old Indian telling a hunt  
tale to Bishop Lajeunesse



Bishop Charlebois on  
a mission tour



Indian cabin, alike the  
one Bishop Charlebois  
often slept into



Near B shop Charlebois' first  
cathedral at Le Pas, 1932  
Bishop Villeneuve, O.M.I., actual  
cardinal, Bishop Charlebois  
Bishop Breynat, O.M.I., Vicar  
Apostolic of Mackenzie

of several new subjects into the Oblate Congregation; but they did not all find their way to Keewatin.

He spent December, January, and the first days of February 1911 in these visits and quests, and it was the middle of February when he left the Province of Quebec. He was back in St. Boniface on February 16, and he went on to Prince Albert to settle some urgent business with his former bishop Mgr. Pascal. These things finished, he went to pay a visit to his dear school at Duck Lake.

"His reception at the school was solemn but very affectionate on the part both of the Sisters and children. The latter who were at first a little awed by the episcopal vestments were not long in recognizing their beloved Father Charlebois of former times. They approached him with their easy behaviour. It must be said that the Bishop approached them like a father", wrote Brother Dagenais to Father William Charlebois in describing this visit.

About twenty of the neighboring priests had gathered at the School to welcome their former fellow-worker and renew their friendly relations with him, at the same time tendering their respectful sympathy to the new Bishop. He spent a whole week there resting in this affectionate atmosphere from the fatigue of his recent emotions, and drawing thence new strength for the work ahead of him.

He left Duck Lake at the end of February, and after passing a few days at Prince Albert, he took the road for Le Pas on March 6, in company with Father Turquetil of Reindeer Lake Mission who had gone to meet him. They arrived within a mile of the village by way of the new railroad, recently opened as far as Le Pas, and were received at the station by Father Renaud, O.M.I., who had come from Cumberland to prepare a reception for the Bishop.

Nearly the entire population, the Protestants as well as the Catholics were there also to welcome their new Pastor. There was a 'carriage' for the Bishop in which he was to proceed to his 'palace'. "It was a simple wagon-box mounted upon runners, and drawn by two horses. Thus was His Excellency brought without further ceremony to his episcopal palace which consisted of a little pent-house, twelve feet square, built against the little chapel which was his cathedral." (*Codex de Pas.*)



Father Renaud had hastily built his little pent-house during the past summer after having the chapel moved from the neighborhood of the saw-mill, to the place it occupies to-day beside the present cathedral.

The furnishings of the palace were as follows: "A kitchen stove and several cases (some full, some empty). That was all the furniture. There was not even a chair, nor a table, nor even a bed. The Bishop spent that night in the home of M. Rosser, Chief Agent of the Hudson Bay Company. Father Turquetil went to the home of Doctor Larose, and Father Renaud remained alone in the episcopal palace. His bed consisted of some blankets." (*Codex de Pas.*)

At ten o'clock on the following morning there was Pontifical Mass. The bishop's throne was an inverted case covered with a carpet, he was assisted by Father Renaud, and two altar boys, one of whom carried the crozier and the other the mitre. Father Turquetil did the singing all by himself. For all that it was magnificent!

After Mass Father Turquetil read the bull of Pius XI naming Father Charlebois Bishop of Berenice, and Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate of Keewatin.

Father Renaud then presented an address to His Excellency in the name of the clergy, religious men and women of the vicariate. He was followed by Dr Larose, a French Canadian, and the oldest white resident in the locality, who presented him with another in the name of the Catholics of the place; and finally Louis Marsolais, a French Canadian half-breed, read one in the Cree language on behalf of the half-breeds and Indians.

"Everything was as simple and unostentatious as possible," we read in the *Pas Codex*, "but it was solemn for all that because it was the taking possession of the new Vicariate."

The same codex gives us the list of missions with resident missionaries, and the names of the latter at the time when Bishop Charlebois took possession of his Vicariate. We believe that it would be interesting here. We add the age of each missionary.

1. Green Lake: Father Teston, O.M.I. (aged 53).
2. Beauval: Father Ancel, O.M.I. (aged 52), with three Lay Brothers, and six Grey Nuns from Montreal.

3. Ile à la Crosse: Father Rapet, O.M.I. (aged 56), with one Lay Brother.

4. Portage La Loche: Father Pénard, O.M.I. (aged 47), and one Lay Brother.

5. Reindeer Lake: Father Turquetil, O.M.I. (aged 35), and Father Egenolf, O.M.I. (aged 35).

6. Lake Pelican: Father Rossignol, O.M.I. (aged 36), and Father Gilloux, O.M.I. (aged 32).

7. Cumberland: Father Boissin, O.M.I. (aged 40), and Father Renaud, O.M.I. (aged 28).

8. Norway-House: Father Lecoq, O.M.I. (aged 65), Father Thomas, O.M.I. (aged 30), one Lay Brother and three Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

9. Cross Lake: Father Bonald, O.M.I. (aged 70).

We may add the names of Father Husson and Father Fafard, each over sixty years old who were to help Bishop Charlebois in the spiritual and temporal administration of his vicariate, but they had not yet arrived.

On the day following his installation Bishop Charlebois went to Cumberland. It had been his first mission and he wished it to be the first to receive his episcopal visitation. He camped in the open, as formerly, during the trip which he made by dog train. It took two days.

His reception at the mission was as solemn as it could be out there in the wilderness. There was a numerous attendance, gun-shooting, hand-shaking etc. After Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament there was an address by Father Boissin, director of the mission, then one from the Indians in their own language. The Bishop was so moved at seeing once more this scene of his first labors that he could not restrain his tears. He was obliged to postpone his reply until the following day.

The Bishop stayed there from March 11 to March 20. He preached an eight-day retreat for the Indians and half-breeds of that place and the surrounding country. The attendances at this retreat were numerous and recollected, and the heart of the devoted Pastor abounded with consolation and joy. The Bishop confirmed thirty-two persons. (See *Débuts d'un évêque missionnaire.*)

Father Turquetil, who had accompanied the Bishop to that point, now returned to Reindeer Lake with orders to make an exploration trip as far as Churchill, in order to study the possibilities of establishing a mission among the Esquimaux. At that time it was not a strict obedience but simply a command to make the journey and to leave his mission at Reindeer Lake to which he was ordinarily attached. His obedience for the Esquimaux country would not be given him until the following year.

On his return to Le Pas, the Bishop found Father Husson waiting for him there. He had arrived during the prelate's absence, to fill the office of Vicariate Procurator. A cousin of the Bishop, with his wife, had also come to take care of the house-keeping at the palace. In the meantime an old Indian cabin had been added to the building of the palace. It had been lent to them by Dr. Larose, and it had been moved over beside the penthouse addition of twelve feet square which was mentioned above. It became the episcopal palace. Partitioned into two rooms, one would serve as the Bishop's and Father Husson's bedroom, while the other room would serve as office, parlor, reception-room, etc. M. Boileau and his wife were installed in the penthouse which served as kitchen and dining-room.

Father Fafard who was to be Vicar-delegate, or Vicar-general, and administrator of the Vicariate during the absence of the Bishop, did not arrive until April 28.

Clearly the episcopal installation of Le Pas could not remain in that crude state. It was truly evangelical poverty; but it was entirely too primitive for a bishop's residence. It would be necessary to build.

They decided to make a beginning with a school-chapel which would temporarily serve as cathedral, school-hall, and episcopal palace. They began to dig the foundation of this monument on May 11. Two days later, on May 13, the Bishop left on his first episcopal visitation, leaving Fathers Fafard and Husson to carry on the work of building. (*Codex de Pas.*)

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## CHAPTER III

### First Pastoral Visitation (May 13 - October 1, 1911)

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This chapter which is devoted to an account of the Bishop's first pastoral visitation, is almost entirely drawn from his own account of it, which was reproduced in entirety in the pamphlet entitled: "*Débuts d'un Evêque Missionnaire*." Unfortunately we can give but a very imperfect abridgement of this account here. We refer those who would like a more complete relation of this visitation to the pamphlet itself. Here is what Bishop Roy, who was coadjutor of the Archbishop of Quebec at that time, says about it.

"I read this message all at one sitting. How beautiful it is! And how clearly it points to the true Church! This simple diary of a bishop at his work would do more for the defense of Catholicism than many books and apologetic reviews. One cannot resist arguments like these if one has eyes to see with. This is a little book that carries the apostolic stamp. It will make the Church better loved, because it is inspired and sustained by such complete devotedness."

Bishop Charlebois set out for the grand tour of his missions on May 13, 1911, accompanied by Father Rossignol who was to take over the direction of Ile à la Crosse, the oldest and most thickly populated mission in the Vicariate, where Father Rapet, overworked and ill, had been left alone.

Before beginning on the work of his visitation, properly so called, Bishop Charlebois was going to Edmonton to consult Father Grandin, Provincial of the Oblates of Alberta-Saskatchewan, upon whom the Oblates of Keewatin depended, the new Vicariate not yet having been constituted a religious vicariate.

The travellers went directly to Duck Lake without stopping off at Prince Albert, and the Bishop passed two very pleasant

days there for he found Bishop Pascal who was also making his visitation at the school. As the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin would have to pass through several missions belonging to the diocese of Prince Albert, Bishop Pascal asked him to be kind enough to confer the sacrament of Confirmation in these places, to which Bishop Charlebois willingly consented.

From Duck Lake the travellers proceeded to Saskatoon, Battleford, and Delmas, where there is an Indian school which was at that time directed by Father Delmas. The Bishop left Father Rossignol there and went on alone to Edmonton.

On his return trip he administered Confirmation in Delmas, on May 20. On May 22 he set out with Father Rossignol for Meadow Lake, where he also administered Confirmation. It was a trip of a hundred miles, over roads that are not good in any season and which that spring were frightful on account of the floods. The journey was very difficult in consequence; it took three days which seemed interminable, even to the Bishop who was already inured to difficult expeditions. They arrived at length at Meadow Lake on May 24, at eight o'clock in the evening, very weary, and very wet, from water upon the roads and rain from the sky. Father Cochin, O.M.I., received them very cordially. He was the director of this mission whose installation is one of the poorest in the extreme North.

No bishop had ever visited this mission before then; the people had never seen one and scarcely any of them had ever assisted at a pontifical Mass. And so when they saw the Bishop officiating pontifically on the following day, they opened their eyes wide in wonder. There were sixty-one confirmations during the afternoon. The ages of the confirmed varied between eight to seventy-five years.

They went from that mission to St. Julian's Mission at Green Lake. It was only forty miles distant, but the road was even worse than that from Delmas to Meadow Lake. Father Cochin had constituted himself the guide of the party, but in spite of the good will of his horses they were obliged to camp by the road, their clothes soaked with mist and water, and their blankets in nearly as bad a condition. At length they arrived in sight of Green Lake during the afternoon of May 27. The Bishop Charlebois entered his own Vicariate, but it was

a strange country to him for all that since he had never previously travelled in this part of his own Western territory.

Green Lake is a sheet of water some twenty miles long, fairly deep, but as a rule very narrow. It was a Hudson Bay trading post which had been rather frequently visited by the Ile à la Crosse missionaries since their first arrival in the country. Toward 1878 or 1879, Father Julian Moulin, O.M.I., lived there for some time, and it was he who put the mission under the patronage of St. Julian. There had been no resident missionary since 1888.

The mission is built at the extreme western point of the northern shore of the Lake so that the Bishop and his companions, who came upon it from the South had to use a boat to cross it. But they had been seen from the first moment of their arrival at the crest of the hill. The bell upon the opposite height immediately began to ring and a fusilade of rifle shots broke from both sides of the Lake, and from the boats that were accompanying the Bishop across. The reports echoing from the surrounding hills sounded like a real battle, or at least a sham fight.

This shooting was repeated in every mission with more or less energy according to the numbers of the inhabitants. It was a part of the ceremonial of the reception of the Bishop, and as Bishop Charlebois observes somewhere, "the people would not believe that the visit was valid without it."

The Bishop noted that the church at Green Lake was newly built and fairly good, but the house of Father Teston, the missionary in charge, was poverty itself. That did not prevent their reception of him from being as solemn as possible. The whole population kneeling at the landing place received the blessing of their first Bishop. Then came the kissing of his ring, and the usual hand-shaking. After that they set out in procession for the church where there were addresses in French and in Cree, followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. There was pontifical High Mass on the following day after which came a four day retreat preached by the Bishop himself, in Cree. The whole congregation followed the exercises faithfully and permitted nothing to distract them. The agent of the Hudson Bay Company having decided to send out a boat during the retreat, he found many who would help to load

it between the exercises, but no one would sail in it as long as the retreat lasted, so the agent was obliged to keep his boat anchored for two days.

The retreat closed on June 1st with a general Communion and sixty Confirmations. The Bishop and Father Rossignol boarded a boat at noon to go down the Beaver, or Upper Churchill River, towards Beauval and Ile à la Crosse.

The voyage to Beauval took three days. It was therefore necessary to camp in the open on two occasions. We have already described this proceeding with the attendant pleasures of these encampments during winter. (See Part II, Chap. I.) They are a little less hard during the summer but it would be a mistake to think of them as picnics. As one keeps travelling until sundown the camping place must be chosen hastily; one lands, pitches his tent and spreads his blankets, all in haste; and when one comes to lie down, there is generally a stump underneath it, or a rock, or a piece of rough ground under one's waist which sticks into the ribs, or breaks one's back and upon which one must twist and turn the whole night long without much hope of getting any rest. Then there are the mosquitoes whose bites replace those of the frost in the winter. The only way to avoid them is by wrapping yourself up in a mosquito net which stifles one during the great heats. (The weave of the mosquito netting is so close as to scarcely permit the circulation of air.) Unless one uses the net one must suffer these undesirable little insects to go free. But the height of pleasure is reached when it rains. One has landed from the canoe or the carriage already soaked to the skin; even the blankets have more or less profited by this general watering, and one spreads damp blankets upon damper ground, and lies in this damp bed with a poorly founded hope of drying it out with the warmth of one's body. But if the rain continues to fall, the bed, far from drying out, becomes wetter and wetter, and should one happen to close his eyes he awakens in a bath. As you see it is an enjoyable experience.

The first day of their descent at the Beaver River was splendid. The second day was rainy. But in spite of that the travellers were able to make all the rapids, though they were obliged to camp under the uncomfortable conditions above

described when night fell. The sun came out again upon the third day, no doubt to celebrate the feast of St. Ovide and wish the Bishop a happy feast. They reached the Beauval School on the evening of that day to the usual sound of a fusilade. Then came a reception at the school which had at that time only 44 pupils, Crees and Montagnais. Before long this number was materially increased. Father Ancel, O.M.I., was the director of this school; he was assisted by three Lay Brothers and six Grey Nuns from Montreal.

This school was formerly the Ile à la Crosse school which had been moved to Beauval in 1906, because the latter place offered better facilities for the development of the farm, as well as for obtaining provisions of wood and hay. Bishop Charlebois arrived there on June 3 and remained until June 11 examining into every detail.

On June 11 he left for Ile à la Crosse with six Montagnais who volunteered to give their services free for God's sake, to come and get the Bishop and Father Rossignol. Father Rapet had asked for a canoe and two men. Ten presented themselves and there was some embarrassment over making the choice. Two canoes each carrying three men were selected so the Bishop and Father Rossignol had a boat apiece.

It is a trip of thirty-five miles from Beauval to Ile à la Crosse, thirty miles on the river, and five upon the lake. The river descent was made easily enough, but the travellers were halted by a high wind at the entrance to the lake. A small steamboat belonging to the Hudson Bay Company came along in the evening and took them in tow, which permitted them to cross the lake in spite of the rough water. It was about nine o'clock when they landed at St. John the Baptist's Mission, where a large number of Indians and half-breeds were waiting for them. The fusilade was very well sustained in consequence.

The Ile à la Crosse mission is the oldest in the country. In fact it is so to speak the Mother-Mission of all the Northern missions. It had been founded in 1846 by Father Taché and Father Lafleche, both of them simple missionaries. Bishop Grandin and Bishop Faraud were there for a long while. It has been called a bishop's nursery. But its situation is deplorable. It stands upon a point of low lying and completely bare



ground. In the winter one would suppose that the church and the village were built in the middle of the lake. The provision of hay and wood is very difficult, for ever since the great floods of 1901 the point has been almost entirely submerged, and since that time a sandbank that has begun to form grows steadily year after year, so that they had to remove the school, that had existed at Ile à la Crosse ever since 1863, to its present site at Beauval. But the Beauval school was for Indians only and so the white children and half breeds of Ile à la Crosse and Beauval were not receiving any education whatever. This situation could not fail to preoccupy Bishop Charlebois from the time of his first visitation.

The inhabitants of this section are very mixed. There are a few white, and a fairly large number of half-breeds, Crees, and Montagnais. The prevailing language, after these two Indian tongues, is French. The church is spacious and beautiful; it was rebuilt at the beginning of the century. This work was begun in 1897 and the church was opened for worship in 1901, just at the time of the beginning of the inundation.

Here also the Bishop preached a retreat. He spoke in Cree, and Father Rapet, who knew both languages, translated his discourse into Montagnais. June 15 was Corpus Christi; there was a solemn procession, and the retreat closed on the following day with a general Communion which was followed by the planting of a cross in the same place where Bishop Grandin had planted one in 1860.

Father Rossignol remained at Ile à la Crosse in charge of the mission, and the Bishop left on the very day of the closing of the retreat in a canoe bound for Portage La Loche, accompanied by three good rowers chosen from among a number of Indians and half-breeds who had offered to transport His Excellency free of charge. An old half-breed had lent him a big canoe which he had just bought, and of which he was quite proud. "Even supposing the King of England were to ask me to rent it to him, I should refuse," said the old man, "but for the Bishop, it is at his service." Among the three rowers were a Cree, a Montagnais, and a half-breed. "This last is charged with the duty of attending to all my needs," wrote Bishop Charlebois, "so I am travelling like a

prince, which is a new thing to me. When I was a simple missionary I had to do my own rowing, and be my own servant." (*Débuts...*, p. 40.)

It was no doubt a novelty to Bishop Charlebois, habituated as he was to paying for every service that he was obliged to ask from the Indians or half-breeds around Lake Pelican, but it was nothing out of the ordinary around Île à la Crosse.

After travelling the whole twenty miles of the north western branch of Lake Île à la Crosse, and ascending the Creuse River, which is merely a narrow strait of 18 miles long, they crossed a little bay in Lake Clair for another three miles and passed through the Great Detroit, a two mile passage connecting Lake Clair with Lake du Bœuf. The Bishop wished to camp upon the shore of the latter lake on Saturday June 17, for he intended spending Sunday there since people there do not travel upon Sundays when they must use oars or skulls. But toward noon, when a good breeze sprang up they were able to hoist the sail and that same night they arrived at the La Loche River. On June 19 the Bishop made acquaintance with the rapids, mosquitoes, and portages of this river. It was early morning on June 20 when they entered Lake La Loche, six miles from the Mission of Our Lady of the Visitation. They could see it upon the opposite hill surrounded by a few houses and many tents of the Montagnais Indians who had assembled to meet their Bishop as well as to assist at the exercises of a retreat which had begun eight days before. A high wind that arose prevented their crossing and they had to be patient, and content themselves with eating the ducks which one of the men had occupied himself in shooting.

The wind died down a little toward the evening and they tried to make the passage. The waves were still high, so high that when the signal that His Excellency was approaching was given Father Pénard would not believe it. But the Bishop arrived at the mission toward ten o'clock in the evening in spite of wind and waves.

Portage La Loche had formerly been a well known place for all who went to the North, and all who came from there had to pass through it. There is a twelve mile portage at the northern end of Lake La Loche. It separates the basins of the

Athabaska and Mackenzie Rivers. The tow-boats from Hudson Bay came to the southern extremity of the portage at that time. Those coming from the North ascended the Clear Water River and brought furs from the North and passengers who wished to leave, or were returning to that section of the country. From time to time the priests from Ile à la Crosse might be seen there, but their visits were not frequent on account of the enormous territory which they had to serve. The Northern traffic having taken the route by Athabaska Landing since 1885, the Athabaska missionaries no longer travel by Portage La Loche. That mission had become rather neglected.

Bishop Grandin appointed Father Pénard to take charge of this mission in 1890, but as Father Rapet was alone at Ile à la Crosse, the new comer was obliged to share his time between the two missions, residing alternately three months at Portage, and three months at Ile à la Crosse. There was neither house nor church. He went from one village to the other, from camp to camp, offering Mass in the house or tent graciously placed at his disposal. It had to serve him also as dining room, reception room, and bed room. He began the construction of a church in 1894. This building was forty feet long by twenty-two wide, and he finished it in the following year. The old log house which he had used as chapel, kitchen, dining-room, and bed-room, etc., had been given to him by a Montagnais Indian; only a screen of cotton canvas separated the altar and tabernacle from the rest of the house so that the Father found himself sleeping quite close to our Lord.

During April 1895 a companion arrived for Father Rapet. Father Pénard was definitely settled at Portage La Loche. He finished his church and the following year he began work upon a house which was to serve him as a place of residence. It was built of logs of course, and measured twenty feet by twenty and was divided into four rooms to which a lean-to was added later on to serve for a kitchen. Father Pénard took possession of this palace in the autumn of 1897. He was quite proud of his establishment, it seemed to his imagination everything that he could desire, so he was rather mortified when he heard Bishop Charlebois describe his fine castle as "a miserable cabin, more fit to shelter the inhabitants of a poultry yard, than for

human beings." But this did not prevent him from being as well off there as in the fine buildings that were constructed later on.

His Excellency passed five days at Our Lady of the Visitation Mission, and was present at the last two days of the Montagnais retreat; the retreat always lasts two weeks in this mission. There was an examination in catechism for those who were to be confirmed. Some of them surprised the Bishop by their theological knowledge, among others was a little boy only five years old who replied perfectly to every question put to him. He answered so well that the Bishop was compelled to admit him both to Communion and Confirmation. The retreat closed on Sunday June 25 with a general Communion, numerous confirmations, and reception of the scapulars of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and of the Sacred Heart.

The Bishop, greatly edified by the piety of his Montagnais Indians, left them on June 26 and started back to Ile à la Crosse where he stayed for two days, after which he continued his journey toward Reindeer Lake, going down the English, or Churchill River which is only a continuation of the Beaver River after it emerges from Lake Ile à la Crosse. This emergence takes the form of a long rapid called le Chagona. Leaving this place the river flows between rocky banks which are nearly always dry and quite incapable of cultivation. Sometimes it flows among an inextricable labyrinth of islands and lakes amid which it is very difficult to find the road unless one knows the country perfectly. Even the Bishop's guide lost his way and only found it again after having travelled uselessly fifteen miles. At times the river becomes narrow, flowing between pointed rocks, and forms rapids nearly always dangerous, and it appears that the rest of the river's course is about the same to its outfall into Hudson Bay at Churchill.

The Bishop, deviating a little from the stream of the great river, went to Lake La Ronge arriving there on July 10. There were about twenty Catholics there who were lost in the midst of Protestants. These good people isolated from any Catholic Mission seldom met a priest. One after another they ended by leaving the place. There is no longer a single Catholic at Lake Ronge. The Bishop stayed there for three days, and then he

had to find a new canoe and a new man, for the Montagnais who had brought him there had gone back home.

He left Lake La Ronge on July 13, and continued his way upon the Upper Churchill as far as Chaudière Rapids, after which he had to return up the Reindeer River which empties itself into the Churchill at the foot of this rapid.

There, the Bishop found himself in a country known to him, and he was the only one in the party who knew the trail, since none of the others had ever travelled that way. So although it was twenty-two years since he had ascended that river the last time, he had to act as their guide. It is true that the course of the Reindeer River is not so complicated as that of the Churchill, but it crosses several lakes into which the falling tributaries might easily be mistaken for the main stream. One afternoon when not quite sure in which direction to turn, he had stopped the canoe. They heard a distant shot and immediately headed toward the sound. They soon came in sight of a tow-boat belonging to the Hudson Bay Company which was manned by a crew of ten Montagnais who were carrying baggage to Reindeer Lake. Both boats were happy at the meeting.

The heavily-laden tow-boat was travelling slowly against the current and they were obliged to make many portages. The Bishop went on ahead for he wanted to arrive at the entrance of the Lake in time for Sunday, for there is a little Cree village there that had occupied his thoughts many times during his trips as Father Charlebois. The Montagnais, understanding his haste, lent him one of their men to assist with the oars, and serve as a guide. Thanks to this reinforcement he was able to reach the little village on the evening of Saturday, July 15.

"Sunday was well employed," he wrote, "we had high Mass, two sermons, catechism, confessions. It was nearly midnight before I could recite my vespers. I sang the high Mass all alone, that is to say with the help of two Indians. The church was only the miserable home of an Indian, my throne was an old box, very dirty, and my altar a table of the same description. The assistants were all seated upon the ground except the so-called chorister who sat beside me upon a tub. There was just room enough for me to get around from my box to the

altar, about six feet. It was thus that I sang pontifical Mass (*Débuts...*, p. 61.)

The following morning it was a question of crossing Reindeer Lake. The tow-boat with the Montagnais who had been left behind by the Bishop had arrived in company with two others coming from Cumberland which had joined it on the way. What is more, several Crees who lived around the entrance to the lake, wished to accompany His Excellency as far as St. Peter's Mission. So there was quite a fleet of boats undertaking to make this long crossing of two hundred miles in company. The voyage had no other incident but a violent storm which dispersed the flotilla among the numerous islands among which they were sailing. Each boat had taken shelter beside the island which seemed good to it, and when calm returned each thought for a little while that all the rest were lost. Happily all were found again safe and sound; they had had nothing worse than a fright out of it.

They reached St. Peter's Mission at the extreme north of Reindeer Lake on July 21. This mission which has been mentioned several times in the preceding pages, was founded in 1860 by Father Gasté. In 1911 it was the most northerly of all the missions of the Vicariate. Father Turquetil was its director, but he happened to be away from home at the moment, for he had started out on the day after Easter for the exploration trip arranged for in the preceding chapter. Later on we shall hear about the results of this trip which at one time caused serious apprehensions at St. Peter's Mission, apprehensions that the Bishop was not long in sharing, for Father Turquetil had been away for over three months and no word of him or of the three Montagnais who accompanied him had come. Fortunately these three men returned before the end of the pastoral visitation bringing news from the priest whom they had left at Churchill toward the middle of June.

Father Egenolf received the Bishop. He had been alone ever since Father Turquetil's departure. He was to remain in solitude for a long while. "He braved this solitude," wrote Bishop Charlebois, "like a courageous missionary, meanwhile displaying great zeal for the spiritual welfare of his Indians

I am pleased with him, and the good God must be so, too." (*Débuts...*, p. 65.)

Meanwhile the Indians had assembled and it was necessary to preach a retreat for them. "I spent five days there," we read in the *Débuts*, "and they were very well filled from four o'clock in the morning until ten or eleven at night. We had three hundred and fifty Indians under our care and it was a question of doing them good. We had to preach, catechize, give interviews, hear confessions, etc. I looked after the Crees and Father Egenolf had the Montagnais. I preached to these last, with the help of an interpreter. The task had its difficulties, but it had its consolations also. It was beautiful to see the childlike faith and simplicity of these Indians. We could have kept them in church the whole day; they would not have found the time too long. All of the parents assisted at the catechism as regularly as the children. They are very ignorant but they at least wish to be instructed. I confirmed a hundred and ten. (*Débuts...*, Ibid.)

Bishop Charlebois left St. Peter's Mission on the afternoon of July 26, and returning by the way he had gone over so many times as a simple missionary, he went from Reindeer Lake to Lake Pelican where he arrived on August 4, to the great surprise of Fathers Guilloux and Renaud who had not expected him so soon. The people had not been notified, and thus he disembarked without the firing of a single shot to announce his arrival. It was only the bell that announced his coming to the people. But if the reception was a little wanting in solemnity its cordiality supplied for everything. There the Bishop met again the people for whose welfare he had labored for a long while as a missionary. Joy and emotion were evident on both sides.

He gave a five day retreat at Lake Pelican during which he was edified by the piety and good dispositions of the Indians. But he complained of the scandal caused by some white, the employees of the trading companies who, not satisfied with doing badly themselves, sought to entice the Indians into the drinking of 'fire water', an intallible means of corrupting them. The good Bishop tells us: "The harm that these corrupt white do among our Indians is incredible; it is a real pestilence."

Unfortunately the pestilence spread in proportion as the numbers of the white increased, until all the missions were infected. This will not be one of the least crimes of the white race before God.

The Bishop left Lake Pelican with Father Guilloux for Pakitawagan on August 10, by the long and difficult road he had so often travelled. He arrived there on August 15, and although there had been no priest there to prepare for his reception, nothing was less magnificent for that, beautiful decorations, flags, banners, ringing of bells and volleys of shots. The good order of the Indians who were ranged up upon the shore to receive the Bishop's blessing and shake his hand moved the good shepherd the more, because it was all the work of the Indians themselves, and on their own initiative.

It was in this mission that Father Charlebois had built his first church when but newly arrived in the country in 1888. (See Part II, Chap. II.) That church still remained but as a residence for missionaries during their visits. A larger chapel had been built the previous year.

Describing the Indians of Pakitawagan, Bishop Charlebois wrote: "They are positively the best Christians in my vicariate. They are distinguished for their good manners, simplicity and intense faith. They love God and serve Him faithfully. The reason why these Indians are so superior is that they have never been in contact with the white." (*Débuts*, p. 78.)

Since 1911 the white have invaded the territory of Pakitawagan and as everywhere else, their example has not been without evil effects. Nevertheless this is still one of the best missions in the North West.

The five-day retreat preached by His Excellency was most edifying. There was a general Communion nearly every day and at the end ninety were confirmed. The candidates were of all ages for never before had a bishop appeared in that place.

Father Guilloux went back to Lake Pelican after the retreat and the Bishop went on alone toward Nelson-House passing through a succession of lakes, rivers and portages, the sweets of which he had so often tasted as a simple missionary



He arrived at his destination on August 25 after many fatigues and some mischances. The aged Father Lecoq who had come from Norway-House was waiting there for him. The Catholics from the surrounding country had been assembled for some time to await the arrival of "The Great Prayer Chief". Unfortunately the greater number of them had had to leave before his arrival, for famine reigned at Nelson-House. But the greater number of them returned as soon as they heard of his arrival. Several Protestants who joined with them came to assist at the ceremonies which surprised them mightily.

It happened that there was a Protestant minister who was disquieted on account of a dream that he had had some time before. He would relate it to everyone who wished to hear it. It seems that he had dreamed that he was dead, and that his soul in the midst of dense shadows was seeking the gates of Heaven. He ended by finding it after a long search, but St. Peter stood on guard at the entrance. "Who are you?" he asked the minister. "I am the Methodist Minister from Nelson-House." Go away quickly. Go down there where you can see the big fire." As he went very unenthusiastically toward the fire indicated, he saw Father Bonald arrive all luminous, and dressed in white. "Ah!" said St. Peter, "you are Father Bonald, Catholic missionary priest?" "Yes." "All right, come right in; we like to receive people like you."

This dream made a deep impression upon the minister who, Bishop Charlebois tells us, seemed to have a faint desire to become a Catholic. We do not know what became of these faint desires, but they doubtlessly caused the dispositions which incited him to lend his canoe so graciously for the transportation of the Bishop and Father Lecoq all the way to Cross Lake.

They left Nelson-House in the minister's canoe on August 29 for the retreat had to be shortened a little because of the famine. After a painful and exhausting trip the Bishop and Father Lecoq came to Holy Cross Mission at Cross Lake on September 2. Old Father Bonald awaited them there with all the surrounding Catholics, and a good number of the Protestants also, for they all wanted to welcome the Bishop whom they had known, loved, and esteemed as a missionary.

As we have already seen, Father Charlebois in 1898 had been the first Catholic priest to visit that place in which he ardently desired to establish a mission. He had even made a rather long stay there at the beginning of 1901, and it was there that he had received the first Protestant adjurations. But precisely at the moment when he was arranging to live there, Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface had sent Father Bonald and the newly ordained Father Beys to Cross Lake which was within his territory. And thus it was they who founded this mission in the autumn of 1901. Father Beys went to found the mission at Norway-House soon afterward, and Father Lecoq came to assist Father Bonald at Cross Lake, while Father Lecoq replaced Father Beys at Norway-House.

Bishop Charlebois contented himself this time with preaching a triduum after which he confirmed 81 persons, all converts from Protestantism. Others might have been confirmed but they were away.

When the triduum was finished, on the morning of September 5, Father Lecoq left Cross Lake to go and prepare for the coming of the Bishop to Norway-house. The Bishop did not leave until the afternoon, but as his men were better rowers than those of Father Lecoq, the priest reached Norway House only one hour ahead of the Bishop. Thus there was no reception because there had been no time to prepare it.

This mission lies at the spot where the Nelson River issues from Lake Winnipeg. It was founded in 1906 by Father Beys in the midst of a completely Protestant district. Father Lecoq assisted by Father Thomas and Brother A. Gauthier, was its director in 1911. There were also four Sisters there, Oblates of the Sacred Heart, who had started an Indian boarding school. But the Methodists who had a school also, intrigued with the Government so well that it refused to recognize the Catholic school. For this reason it had been transferred to Cross Lake, although that place was much less suitable than Norway-House for a school of this kind, as we shall have occasion to see later on.

On September 2, after only three days at Norway-House, the Bishop left in the company of Father Turquetil who had returned from his great journey to Churchill, and rejoined

His Excellency. He was to accompany him all the way to Le Pas where they would discuss plans to be undertaken in connection with the projected establishment of the Esquimaux mission.

The return trip to Le Pas turned out to be difficult. The travellers were almost stopped by a storm of wind and rain upon Lake Winnipeg. The trip to Grand Rapids which ordinarily takes two days took then seven days. They had to remain at Grand Rapids for six days instead of the two which Bishop Charlebois had intended, because they could not find a canoe to carry them to Le Pas. Wind and rain came to stop them again as they were ascending the Grand Rapid itself, and upon Cedar Lake. It was October 1, when the Bishop reached Le Pas.

This episcopal journey had taken him four months and a half during which he had had no rest, for they had been forever travelling, often obliged to sleep in a tent under the most painful conditions and his arrival at the various missions, far from affording him any opportunity to relax had on the contrary only added to his fatigues, as we have seen in the preceding pages. Sermons, catechism lessons, confessions, had taken all of his time without taking into account the innumerable palavers with the Indians who were always the more anxious to make themselves heard the less they had to say. Bishop Charlebois had worked hard all during his missionary life, but we believe that he had never been confronted with such a task as this, his first episcopal visitation.

He thus concludes his account of it: "I travelled three hundred miles by train, eighty miles in a carriage without springs, two thousand miles in canoes, from forty to fifty miles on foot in the portages across the forests. I slept upon the ground sixty times under the shelter of a little tent, and I celebrated Mass as many times under the same tent. I visited fourteen mission stations with a population of four thousand and five hundred Catholics. Six of these missions had never before been visited by a bishop. I preached seven retreats of from four to six days each, and confirmed eleven hundred Indians whose good dispositions edified me more than a little."

Taken alone this simple statement is sufficiently eloquent, but the Bishop goes on: "I was pained to note the small

number of missionaries. The Indians in ten or twelve important pagan or Protestant centres are asking for a Catholic priest, and I have no one whom I can send to them.

"The foundation of a mission in the Esquimaux country is very urgently needed." (*Débuts...*, pp. 99-100.)

The effort to find missionaries, and to procure the necessary means for the founding of these missions, such was the end that Bishop Charlebois proposed to himself, and pursued without relaxation during the whole course of his episcopate.



## CHAPTER IV

### Journeys      Correspondence — Various Foundations (1911-1923)

On his return from the great tour of the missions on October 1, Bishop Charlebois again took possession of his famous episcopal palace which measured fourteen feet square! Besides His Excellency, this palace had to house Fathers Fafard, Husson, and Turquetil. The new residence begun the preceding spring, at the same time as the combination school-cathedral, was not yet finished. Toward the end of the month both buildings were ready, but the Bishop was absent while the moving took place, for he had left on October 2 for Ottawa, where he had to negotiate with the Government on behalf of the Keewatin schools, a highly important question for the Catholics of the new Vicariate.

Until 1912, Keewatin, which has since been separated from the civil province of Manitoba, was a part of the unorganized North Western Territory, and depended directly upon the Federal Government at Ottawa. A special clause in the statutes positively recognized the equality of rights of both Catholics and Protestants as far as education was concerned. There had been talk of annexing Keewatin to Manitoba in 1911 when a government proposition of this had been laid before Parliament, but this project did not at all consider the educational rights of the Catholic minority. According to the bill, once the annexation had been made, Keewatin would be legally subject to the Manitoba educational laws. This legislation was a crying injustice to the Catholics. It permitted them to have their own schools provided that they supported them from their own money, while they had at the same time to pay taxes destined for the so-called public schools, which is to say the Protestant schools.

when they were not worse. Thus they were compelled to pay twice over.

It was in order to try and prevent this injustice that Bishop Charlebois undertook that journey to Ottawa, and that he started such an active campaign of petitions and protestations in which he was strongly supported by the valiant Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface.

In spite of all these efforts, the conservative government of Ottawa, yielding to the threats and clamours of the fanatical Orangemen of Ontario and Manitoba, refused to amend the bill which passed without modification, and so to speak, without opposition through the Chamber and the Senate. Under these circumstances the deputies and ministers of the Catholic conservative party, for the pretended interests of the party, betrayed the cause of the Catholics of Keewatin, as the liberal ministers and deputies had betrayed those of Manitoba in 1896; and those of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905. This conduct had profoundly shocked and pained Bishop Charlebois.

Meanwhile the two buildings we saw beginning at Le Pas were almost finished at the middle of October. As we have said, one of them was to serve as an episcopal residence, and the other as a temporary cathedral, school, and hospital. Before the Bishop's return from Ottawa, the episcopal residence had been moved from the little shack in which we saw him installing himself in March, and Father Fafard took possession of the new residence. The first Mass in the new temporary cathedral was celebrated on October 22.

Four Grey Nuns from St. Hyacinthe arrived at Le-Pas during April 1912. One was to teach, and the other three to conduct the hospital. But they very soon discovered that the hospital was badly situated, being in the same building with the school and the cathedral. The Bishop therefore resigned the episcopal residence to the Sisters, for their convent and hospital, and installed himself in the other building.

The costs of these two buildings were not half paid, and Bishop Charlebois once again wrote to his benefactors to excite their generosity, and implore their help. He took advantage of his journey to Ottawa to go to Montreal and Quebec to solicit the help of some charitable persons, and we must say that he

was more successful in this than he had been with the politicians, for although he did not receive enough to pay all his debts, he was at least enabled to pay a good part of them.

Father Turquetil, who had returned with Bishop Charlebois to Le Pas, had given a favorable report on the establishment of a mission among the Esquimaux, but nothing could be decided upon immediately, so, as soon as the ice had opened up the winter roads, Father Turquetil set out again for Reindeer Lake. He left Le Pas on December 9, 1911.

The foundation of an Esquimaux mission at Chesterfield Inlet was not decided upon until February 15, 1912, by the Council of the Vicariate. Father Turquetil was immediately sent for but he stayed at Le Pas only a few days. He left for Montreal on March 9 to try and gather up some alms, and to procure supplies for the future mission. Everything had to be transported by water, building supplies, food, provisions, and coal, for, as Father LeBlanc, who was Father Turquetil's first associate, wrote: "One could not find two little pieces of wood to make a small cross in all the Chesterfield country."

Father Turquetil with his companion Father LeBlanc, who had recently arrived from France, embarked on July 24, 1912, upon the "Nascopie", a Hudson Bay boat which was carrying the supplies for several of the Company's posts in the Bay at the same time. The voyage was rather rough amid the floating ice, and it was not until September 3 that they were able to land at Chesterfield Inlet, where they were to found the mission of Our Lady of Deliverance. We cannot follow their work of installation, nor their material nor moral building here. It must suffice to record that the first moments were very painful, and that in spite of the zeal of both missionaries, I was nearly ten years before they had the consolation of making even one conversion. We shall meet with them later on.

Bishop Charlebois visited all his missions again in 1912, with the exception of Reindeer Lake, and perhaps Cross Lake. During the winter he visited Cumberland and Lake Pelican, and between May and September he visited the district of Ile à la Crosse. Considering the multiplicity of his occupations it is evident that an annual visitation of all his missions was an impossibility. So during the following year he contented himself with visiting the missions of the North and East only. He visited



the Western district again in 1914. One can easily see that with the new missions he was about to open in the East, visitation of the North and East during the same year would keep him away too long.

Starting from 1915 the visitation of the Vicariate was divided into three parts: 1. The Western district: Green Lake, Beauval, Ile à la Crosse, Portage La Loche, and the new missions to be created in this district; 2. The Northern district: Cumberland Lake, Pelican, Reindeer Lake, Pakitawagan, and, later on, Sturgeon Landing; 3. The Eastern district: Norway House, Cross Lake, Nelson House, and a little later, Island Lake, and God's Lake. Thus the visitation of each mission every three years during the whole of Bishop Charlebois' episcopacy was assured. But visits were even more frequent in some of the missions when extraordinary reasons demanded it.

We see Bishop Charlebois making his first *ad limina* visit in 1912, the visit that every bishop must make every five years to give an account of his diocese to the Holy Father. He left for Rome on October 4, a little while after his return from Portage La Loche, and he did not return until April 1, 1913. The length of this journey was owing to the apostolic tour which he was asked to make among the colleges and seminaries of France and Belgium, for the purpose of exciting vocations for the missions. In spite of his timidity and repugnances, he accepted these invitations with a devotion which under the circumstances might very well be described as heroic. "It was a hard task for me," he said to his missionaries on his return home. But wherever he spoke he made a good impression. Father Bernard O.M.I., superior of the Oblate Scholasticate in Liege, wrote to Father Dozois, the Assistant General: "He made the great figure of Bishop Grandin live again in the seminaries. If more vocations do not come following the visit of this last one, times must have changed. The vocations came, and were fairly numerous, but Bishop Charlebois profited very little by them, chiefly on account of the Great War which broke in the following year and was the cause of a veritable hetacomb of missionaries and mission students for four long years.

He returned from his visit to pius X strengthened and very much edified by the Holy Father's kindness. "I have already told you in personal letters to each of you about the happiness

I experienced in this visit," he wrote to his missionaries "The Pope is interested in your missions; he loves you, and blesses you... I feel sure that this blessing from the Pope, who is a saint, will bring you happiness, and produce a salutary effect upon your people. In return let us love the Pope, and labor to make him beloved, for to love the Pope is to love God Himself. (Circul. No. 6.)

The poor Bishop found an enormous accumulation of mail on his return to Le Pas, and it came as much from his friends and benefactors as from his missionaries. He set to work upon it at once reading every letter, and replying to each with care. It is our conviction that never during the whole of his life, did he leave a letter unanswered, no matter how humble the writer, or insignificant the subject of which it treated. He received dozens of letters every day; at Christmas or New Year they often exceeded a hundred. Whenever a journey of several months caused this correspondence to accumulate upon his desk, one may judge of the work needed in order to straighten it all out. Nevertheless he read them all, and answered them all. And he replied as completely and as calmly as though he had nothing else to do but reply to that one alone. Never was there a sign of impatience in his replies; never a complaint about the number of letters to which he must reply, except that sometimes in writing to his missionaries, to whom he spoke more freely, when it happened that he was writing: "I am not writing to you at length today because I am very busy."

But it was only when the letters were either unimportant, or very serious and demanding a lengthy reply, that he did that, and so he deferred giving them the reply they called for, until he had a moment to reply peacefully. During the whole of his episcopate, he took pains to keep in touch with each of them by letters in which he answered their doubts, and gave them practical directions upon the manner of their lives and the ways in which they should conduct their missions, according to the case presented to his judgment. Could all those letters be assembled in one volume they would form a comprehensive book of instructions that would be practical as regards the direction and administration of missions. There is already a collection of his circulars, a very precious mine of material, but these circulars deal of necessity with generalities, and do not give a

quarter of the practical directions that his private letters contain.

In order to face this enormous work, Bishop Charlebois continued to rise an hour before the rest of the community, recited his breviary, assisted at the prayers and meditation, and then celebrated his Mass. After breakfast, that is to say toward eight o'clock, he went to his desk until the hour for the particular examination, a quarter of an hour before noon. After dinner there was a quarter of an hour's siesta, and then he returned to his desk until the six o'clock prayer time. After night prayers he continued to work at his desk until ten or eleven o'clock. He never varied this routine, not even when he had to preside at ceremonies in the cathedral at ten or eleven in the morning, or when he arrived home late at night after a long and fatiguing journey. He always rose at the same hour. The only recreation he took was splitting the wood for heating right beside the door of the episcopal residence, or working in the garden for half or three quarters of an hour a day. When the desk work was not so pressing he sometimes devoted half a day to these works.

Writing about this, a Presentation Sister says: "We were just about to store our first harvest of vegetables in the cellar, when the Bishop came along with a wheel-barrow. "You gathered these vegetables, my good Sisters, but I will carry them in and put them in the cellar with the help of your 'boys', and we had to give way."

He was very often distracted by visitors. When they were white he made no trouble about cutting the interview short, or in passing them on to one of his assistants. But it was the Indians who disturbed him most frequently. Here, as at Duck Lake, or Cumberland, or Lake Pélican, the Indians considered him their property and made no bones about coming to see him at any hour of the day. In proportion as they had fewer things to say, they lengthened these visits, and when they had something, trying not to say it. In case there was anything really serious to talk over, it was their custom to talk quite uselessly for at least a good half hour before coming to the point. The good Bishop who was always so busy listened patiently and sweetly to all this wordiness. He was like a good grandfather who was pleased to let his grandchildren tyrannize over him, as far as the Indians were concerned.

At times, for all that, when the work pressed too hard, he grew impatient, so long as the Indians were not around. "It is not reasonable," he said, "they disturb me for nothing and hinder me from working. If they come again, I will not see them. Send them away as best you can; do not let them disturb me." But should he hear them talking in the Cree language in the reception room, he went down in a hurry without waiting to be called, and he gave the Indian as long an audience as he was pleased to make it.

The ordinary termination to every visit was the giving of some help to the visitor. The Indians always asked for something and Bishop Charlebois did not know how to refuse when they asked for charity. At other times the Bishop found himself charged with a commission which obliged him to undertake a frequently complicated correspondence in the Indian's favor; that much was added to his already overwhelming burden. He continued a correspondence in this way for years upon years and formed a regular brief, for the return of the value of her script out of which she had been swindled, to a half-breed of Reindeer Lake. Afterward he undertook overture after overture to prevent a Cree of Pakitawagan from being dispossessed of a mine which he had discovered. It was the same in many other cases, cases less important and complicated, but whose multiplicity added a no less heavy burden to his labors.

Besides, when on his travels he found some poor child whose religious instruction had been more or less neglected, he did his best to have him sent to the hospital where he would leave everything else for half an hour of catechism, until he was sufficiently instructed in the truths of Faith. He sometimes had as many as three or four of these children there at the same time. If an Indian were sick in the hospital the Bishop undertook to visit and console him, hear his confession, and in case of danger, administer the last sacraments.

When in spite of all these interruptions he finished putting his correspondence in order, and settling the affairs belonging to the administration, he would set off to visit one or more of the little posts that depended directly upon the cathedral parish: Barrows, Pine Bluff, Cedar Lake, or Grand Rapids. He usually made these journeys on snow-shoes, or in a canoe, as in former years. This he continued to do until his death, for it was while

on one of these trips that he was attacked by the illness of which he died.

When setting out on one of these expeditions he never failed to take with him some packages of linen destined for the most necessitous of those whom he was to visit. This linen was provided by his friends and benefactors in Lower Canada and the United States. It was the evident result of what he had named the 'Work of Old Linen', that we have already seen him trying to organize when he was a missionary in Cumberland. When the case containing this old linen arrived, it was he himself who unpacked it, arranged and ticketed each article in a corner of the attic, where he would go himself to fetch them for distribution to the various missions, or to his Indian visitors, according to their needs, or their requests.

The next building after the Bishop's house and the hospital at Le Pas was the presbytery at Portage La Loche, to replace 'the miserable hut' of which we heard in the last chapter, the 'hut in which nevertheless Father Pénard and Brother Pioger had spent so many happy hours. Father Girard came to lend a hand to Father Pénard in 1912 and old Brother Is. Lapointe undertook to build them a 'castle.' They took possession of the new building during the winter of 1913, but the so called 'castle' was not finished inside for the want of planks, and that work was not done until much later, so that the cold made himself quite at home there. All these drawbacks make Father Pénard, who was not particularly friendly toward progress, say that they were better off in the old hut.

Father Renaud settled at Pakitawagan in 1913. Hitherto there had been no resident mission there. The good dispositions of his people brought many consolations to the missionary; but from the material point of view this mission was poverty personified.

Father Fafard was obliged to leave Le Pas and return to the East in the December of 1914. He had fulfilled the functions of administrator of the cathedral parish; now he was worn out by age and sickness. His departure was very painful to Bishop Charlebois for he had been his right hand, and he was not replaced until Father Joseph Guy arrived in the following year. This young missionary arrived full of health and strength and during his five years as administrator, delegated

vicar, and procurator, he rendered the greatest service to Bishop Charlebois, and the whole Vicariate. Father Guy was the future Vicar Apostolic of Grouard, and was promoted in 1937 to be Bishop of Gravelbourg.

When the Archbishop of Montreal asked the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin to share with him "the sacred task of confirmations", in the city and suburbs of Montreal, he replied affirmatively. From there, with the authorisation of the bishops, he toured the other eastern dioceses, particularly those of Sherbrooke and St. Hyacinthe. At the invitation of the pastors he went to sing pontifical Mass, and preach about his missions whose needs both in personnel and material, he made known in the principal churches. Thus these apostolic tours enabled him to gather considerable alms for the support of his missions, and to bring to light many vocations of priests and lay brothers. These activities wearied him a great deal. Nevertheless he continued in them faithfully from 1915 until and including the year of his death. He would leave Le Pas during Lent, or immediately after Easter, return in the beginning of June, rush through his correspondence, and then set off on his own pastoral visitation.

While he was administering confirmation in Montreal, an internal trouble from which he had suffered for a long while obliged him to take a course of a severe treatment. During the same period Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface also came to the Hotel Dieu to be taken care of. But his illness was too far advanced and a few days later he surrendered his beautiful soul to God, while Bishop Charlebois was not able to be with him in his last moments.

That death was a hard blow for him: "I have lost my father". he wrote to Father Myre, and this sorrow added to the weakness caused by his own trouble, threw him into a sort of discouragement from which only his spirit of faith and confidence in God were able to withdraw him. Although only imperfectly recovered himself, he insisted upon accompanying the body of the venerable Archbishop from Montreal to St. Boniface, where he assisted at the very impressive funeral services.

He was back in Le Pas on June 26 and the arrival of Father Guy who was to replace Father Fafard on July 10 gave him back

his courage. He did not stay long to keep the new comer company. He set out for Cross Lake on July 16 and from thence to Port Nelson, and Chesterfield, the Esquimaux mission. He went as far as Winnipeg by the railroad, and from there, crossing Lake Winnipeg in a steamboat, he arrived at Cross Lake Mission on July 22.

He found them building a boarding school for Indian children at Government cost. This school was originally to have been at Norway-House where the Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart had already begun one in a small way. But the Methodist ministers made such an outcry against it that the Government had refused to build, or to permit the building of such a school at Norway House for fear of their coming into competition with the Methodist school. So the Sisters had been obliged to move to Cross Lake, where building was actively proceeding under the direction of the lay Brothers, A. Gauthier and Cordeau. But the school was not ready for inauguration at the time of the Bishop's arrival. That would take place in the following year. He therefore contented himself with preaching a ten-day retreat to the assembled Indians who were awaiting his visitation.

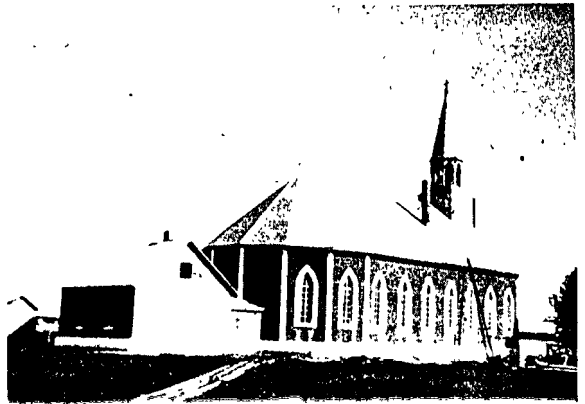
His Excellency left Cross Lake on August 2 and pushed toward Port Nelson, stopping by York Factory. Passing through a series of more or less large lakes, by means of more or less long difficult portages, and little rivers more or less navigable, the Bishop and the two Indians who were accompanying him dropped into the Hayes River and shot its hundred and thirty rapids without serious damage arriving at York Factory on August 13. This is a celebrated post in the annals of the Hudson Bay Company, because it was the central point of the trade between England and the Canadian North West; it is situated at the mouth of the Hayes River into Hudson Bay.

The Bishop had arranged to continue his way from there to Port Nelson, situated at the mouth of the river of the same name, by sea. He arrived there in the evening of August 14.

At that time the Federal Government was trying to make a big port at the entrance of the Nelson River, which was destined later to serve as a railroad terminus at Hudson Bay, and to take care of shipping from the high seas. No shipping of even medium tonnage had ever been able to approach within ten miles of the mouth of the Nelson without being engulfed in



Ile à la Crosse Mission. Photographed in 1934.



Church at Ile à la Crosse 1934

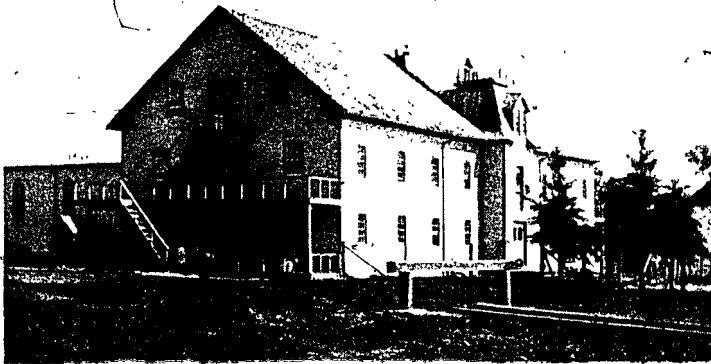
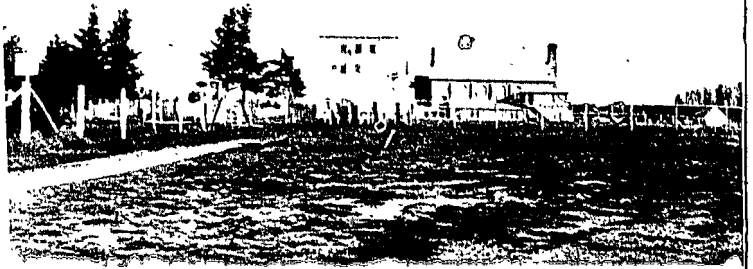


Residence of the Fathers at Ile à la Crosse 1934



General view of Ile à la Crosse.





School seen from the North West  
The girls' playground. Burnt in  
September 1927



Beauvoir, Sask.

the mud that was brought down by the streams of the Red River, and the Saskatchewan, and deposited in the Bay. The building of a great harbor in the midst of this mud was therefore a veritable utopian plan to the politicians at Ottawa. They were forced to abandon it after many of their millions had been swallowed up in the waters of the Bay. In the end, common sense prevailed, and the beautiful natural port of Churchill was chosen for the railroad terminus.

They were working on Port Nelson in 1915. There were a thousand workmen employed and they were of all languages and every nation. Among them were three hundred Catholics, the greater number of them happy to take advantage of the Bishop's visit to approach the sacraments which had not been possible for them for a long while.

The missionary bishop spent three days among these good people, and on the morning of the 18th he set out once more for York Factory. It had been arranged that a boat should leave for Chesterfield on the following day, and as there are only twenty miles between Port Nelson and York Factory, the Bishop and his companions believed they might easily cover them in one day. But the sea being too rough would not permit them to stand off in the open, so they had to hug the coast where the water was not deep enough for navigation, and they had to walk and tow their boat. It was a difficult walk, too, for if there were five or six inches of water on top, there were five or six inches of mud underneath. A puff of wind having carried away the Bishop's hat, he started to pursue the fugitive. Far from regaining possession of it, he fell full length in the mingled water and mud and had a great deal of trouble to extricate himself. He succeeded after a while in getting up, but he was covered with mud from head to foot. After spending some time in clearing it out from his eyes, nose, and mouth, he said goobye to his hat and proceeded on his way. A little further on, he discovered that he had left his pastoral ring in the mud where he had fallen. That was a sad loss to him. Meanwhile the tide had gone out leaving them 'high and dry', if one could say that in the middle of the mud. They had to wait until the next tide to continue their walk, under the same conditions as before. The new tide carried them to within six miles of York Factory and the Bishop, in order not to miss the boat, left the

men there and walking on in the mud arrived at the fort broken with fatigue, only to learn that the boat having advanced its sailing by a day, had already started the day before. So all his fatigues had been useless and he had missed his trip to Chesterfield.

The zealous pastor was grieved at the impossibility of visiting the two missionaries in Chesterfield. They had been enjoying a too complete solitude for three years, in the midst of the Esquimaux who still clung to their paganism, not one of them having thus far profited by the graces of salvation offered to them. A visit from their bishop would have strengthened these poor missionaries, and it might even have impressed the natives, if the very sight of so many apparent useless sacrifices had not discouraged the Bishop himself and decided him to recall the missionaries from that place, for he had so much need of them elsewhere. But Providence directs everything for the best even when upsetting the best and seemingly most useful plans. In the end he had to start back again over the same road and following the same route as in coming. The only difference was that instead of descending the hundred and thirty rapids of the Hayes River, they had to ascend them, a little harder if it was rather less dangerous.

The Bishop got back to Cross Lake on September 3 and set off again on the 5th. After a rather stormy passage of Lake Winnipeg he arrived at Grand Rapids on the 14th. He stopped there for a few days preaching and catechising the Catholics of the place. He was back again in Le Pas on September 25th, "after accomplishing the most painful journey of his whole episcopal career." (*Notes de voyage.*)

Bishop Charlebois had not recovered from the trouble which had obliged him to go to Montreal at the time of Archbishop Langevin's death in the preceding spring. During the trip to Fort Nelson this trouble increased, and he was obliged to go East again at the beginning of February 1916, where he underwent a serious operation, that nearly cost him his life. He remained at the hospital over six weeks, and was still very weak when he left it in April for the home of one of his sisters, Madame Pigeon, where he remained to convalesce for about two weeks. Then, scarcely recovered, he set to work, seeking for help for his poor missions, in Montreal and in some

other dioceses of the Province of Quebec. He was back again at Le Pas where a great deal of work awaited him on June 3.

As soon as he had regulated his correspondence and settled his urgent business, he set out to visit his Northern missions, Cumberland, Lake Pelican, Pakitawagan, and Reindeer Lake. On his return at the beginning of August, he found the new school building, which had been begun in the spring, now well advanced. The building of this school had become urgent, for the hall which served as a class room at the Bishop's House Cathedral-School had become much too small.

This year saw the blessing and solemn inauguration of the Cross Lake School. Toward April 20 the Bishop went to St. Boniface from whence he started on the 30th at the head of a large party of priests, religious and distinguished lay people. They embarked upon the boat Wolverine, crossed Lake Winnipeg and arrived at Cross Lake on September 2nd where the people were astonished to receive a visit from so many distinguished personages.

The blessing of the school took place on the following day, which was September 3rd. It was designed to shelter a hundred Indians. This extraordinary and very imposing ceremony caused great astonishment among the Indians in this out of the way country, and was a great joy to Bishop Charlebois. (See *Cloches de St. Boniface*, 1916, pp. 290-298.)

This joy was soon changed to bitter sorrow, for news arrived of the death of poor Father LeBlanc at sea, while returning from the Esquimaux in an effort to recover his strength broken by the fatigues and privations he had suffered in the inhospitable climate, where he had passed four long years. But it seems as though his death was the signal for the graces of conversions among the poor Esquimaux. These rebels against grace began to be converted in the following year.

The devoted pastor made another journey during the July of 1917. This time it was to visit the devoted workmen at Port Nelson, but instead of making the trip by water he took the railroad from Le Pas to Hudson Bay. The line was far from being finished, but it was open for traffic for 332 miles. He was accompanied by his nephew to this point, the scholastic, Brother Martin Lajeunesse, O.M.I., who had been obliged to interrupt his studies on account of his health and had come

to the West to try and get his strength back. Brother Martin had wanted to accompany his uncle to the end of the trip, but when it became necessary to take to a cutter which was too small to carry four persons, the Bishop embarked alone and Brother Martin went back to Le Pas by the next train.

This journey was again very painful and fatiguing for the missionary bishop. Writing to his niece, Sister St. Ovide, a few days after his return, he says: "I nearly failed to come back myself. I had a good trip from the point of view of souls, otherwise it was a miserable journey, and very fatiguing. I was obliged to walk forty miles in mud and water. I got home here very exhausted."

While he was still at Port Nelson, he heard by wireless of the death of his sister, Alma, the mother of the two Fathers Pigeon, O.M.I., one of whom was to perish later on in a snow-storm in the Esquimaux country. The death of this sister was very painful to the heart of Bishop Charlebois, for when she was still a child, the mother of the family died and this sister had so to speak served as a mother to him and his younger brothers. "You can understand", he wrote to his cousin Sister St. Edwige, of the Grey Nuns of Montreal, "that this unexpected death has stricken me with consternation. I have lost my second mother. My heart was, and still is, very much grieved. We may believe that the good God loves us since He 'does not spare us trials'" (Letter to Sister St. Edwige.)

A consolation came to the Bishop in a visit from his brother Father William during October. Father William had come to accompany him to Winnipeg where His Excellency had to go and submit to another operation which this time was entirely successful.

In the September of that year Brother Martin Lajeunesse, and a Brother of Father Guy, Father Ovide Guy, who some years after was himself to enter the Oblate Congregation, went to Beauval (still mistakenly called Lake La Plonge) there to continue their theological studies under the direction of Father Pénard who had just left Portage La Loche for the Indian school at Beauval. A few months later Brother Dubeau, and then Brother Doyon came to join these two first students. This was the beginning of the Scholasticate of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus, which, thanks to its salubrious climate, was to

enable a number of young Oblates to continue their studies without too much difficulty, to the great benefit of Keewatin, and even of the neighboring provinces and vicariates. One cannot help regretting that the lack of a teaching personnel obliged the closing of this little scholasticate.

At the same time that the Beauval scholasticate opened its doors the Ile à la Crosse school reopened. This school had been founded in 1863, and supported by the mission, it was open to all the children of the district. But for reasons indicated above (see Chapter III) it had been removed in 1906 to Beauval, and recognized by the Federal Government as an Indian boarding school. From that time the children of half-breeds, or white, could not be admitted. The result was that the children of Ile à la Crosse, and the surroundings were without instruction, and this for ten years. That could not go on. Bishop Charlebois began in 1916 the building, under the direction of Father Rossignol, of a convent destined to be used as a day and boarding school for the white, and half-breed children. All was to be done at the charges of the mission. The work was finished the following year, and in the autumn, four or five Grey Nuns from Montreal came to revive the tradition and continue the work of their predecessors, after a long interruption. It must have been God's work for the devil after having done everything possible to prevent its revival did everything to destroy it, as we shall see later on.

The personnel of the Bishop's House moved at the end of August from the apartments they had occupied in the building which was serving as a provisional cathedral, to install themselves in an annex of the hospital, an annex which did duty for the episcopal residence until the building of the present Bishop's House. This change was made in order to leave room for the Presentation Sisters, of St. Hyacinthe, whose arrival was expected. Bishop Charlebois had learned to appreciate the devotedness of these good religious when he was director of the Duck Lake School, and they had consented to take care of the Catholic School of Le Pas. Six of them arrived at the beginning of September and the school has never ceased to prosper from that time under their capable direction, it has grown so much that a few years later it was found necessary to enlarge it

Father Le Blanc's death had left Father Turquetil alone among the Esquimaux. Not finding any companion for him, Bishop Charlebois obtained permission from Rome to ordain Brother Pioger, who before becoming a lay brother had made nearly all of his theological studies. This ordination took place on June 21, 1918, in the provisional cathedral at Le Pas. It was the first ordination in the Vicariate of Keewatin. Father Pioger started immediately for the Esquimaux country accompanied by Father Turquetil who had come to Le Pas in search of a companion.

The end of this year and the beginning of the following one were saddened by the ravages of the Spanish gripe which took more victims in the whole world than the Great War. "A proof," said Bishop Charlebois, "that God is not short of punishments with which to chastize the impiety of men." Unfortunately men would not understand. It was a case of saying with Scripture: "They have eyes and see not, and ears and they hear not" and reason to act foolishly... and they still do it.

In spite of the Spanish gripe the Bishop journeyed to Ile à la Crosse in December to ordain Brother Dubeau who was making his theological studies at Beauval. The ordination took place on January 6, 1919 in the church of Ile à la Crosse before a numerous congregation of Indians and half-breeds eagerly desirous of seeing this imposing ceremony which they had never seen before. The Bishop on this occasion used the wooden crosier that had been made by a lay brother for Bishop Grandin. (*Codex of Le Pas.*)

Bishop Charlebois had been to Munster, Saskatchewan in the January of 1920, to confer ordination there for the Benedictine Fathers. From there he went on to Edmonton where Archbishop Legal, O.M.I., was very ill. On his return from this journey he was himself a trifle 'grippy' and very worn out. But behold, in the midst of a frightful blizzard an Indian arrived with a dog train asking for a priest to go on a two-day trip to administer an old Indian who had not approached the sacraments for many years. The Bishop was the only priest who could speak Cree and he made it his duty to go unhesitatingly with the Indian. "At that moment", writes Sister St. Donat, "the blizzard increased with such violence that it seemed like hell let loose. 'You cannot go in the state you are in, and

through such a storm: you will perish on the way,' they told the venerable prelate. He replied to them with a big smile: 'Can't you see very well that it is the old Charlot who is trying to prevent me from going to snatch from him a victim that he covets? I am going, and at once, for the salvation of a soul admits of no delay.' When he returned three or four days afterward his grippe was gone, and he had opened the gates of eternal happiness for the poor dying man." (Letter from Sr. St. Donat to Bishop Lajeunesse.) How many similar stories one finds in the life of this courageous apostle.

This year, 1920, may well be included in those years of trial of which we shall hear in the following chapter; he certainly had some very severe ones to undergo that year. The first of these was the fire at Ile à la Crosse convent, which we saw him opening in 1917. The fire completely destroyed everything. It happened on the evening of Maundy Thursday while everyone was assisting at the Holy Hour. The fire having broken out in the interior of the building the whole place was already a furnace when they saw the flames from the church. They could save nothing, not even a poor sick girl whom the Sisters had left in bed when they went to the church.

This sad news did not reach Bishop Charlebois until he arrived in Montreal where another, still sadder, awaited him in the death of his brother Procul who died on the very day of the Bishop's arrival, so that he did not even have the consolation of closing the eyes of this brother whom he loved so tenderly. It was April 8.

Only a few days later, on April 11 the ordination of Bishop Charlebois' nephew, Brother Martin Lajeunesse took place. We have already spoken several times of him who was destined to become his uncle's coadjutor; and then his successor, as the head of the Vicariate Apostolic of Keewatin thirteen years afterward. Bishop Charlebois' chief intention in undertaking this journey had been the sacerdotal ordination of this nephew. He had promised himself a great deal of joy and happiness but the double mourning, that at Assumption, and the other at Ile à la Crosse, had thrown a heavy mantle of sadness over the robes of joy, and the two families of Charlebois and Lajeunesse who had come together for the joys of an ordination were obliged to assist at a funeral on the following day. "We must admit



that the joy was not unmixed," they wrote in the *Parish Bulletin of St. Peter*, in giving an account of this ordination. "At the very moment the ordination was taking place, Monsieur Procule Charlebois was actually lying dead. He had died on the previous Thursday and was lying in his own house at Assumption, just a few steps from the church, awaiting his requiem Mass which was sung by Bishop Charlebois himself on the following day." (*Parish Bulletin of St. Peter*, April 18, 1920.)

The holy Bishop wrote me about this: "Thus are the joys of earth, even the holiest ones, are mingled with sorrows and mourning, in order to make us understand that we are not at home here below."

Putting his whole confidence in God, the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin did not suffer all these misfortunes to overwhelm him. In accord with Father Rossignol he determined to rebuild the convent and school at Ile à la Crosse immediately. He took advantage of his stay in the East to raise funds for this purpose.

He returned to Le Pas at the beginning of May and prepared for a pastoral visitation of the Ile à la Crosse district. He started off on May 17, taking with him his newly ordained nephew, Father Martin Lajeunesse, who was returning to Beauval. The journey would have been fairly easy if the Bishop had gone directly to his western missions, but in order to do a service for Bishop Pascal, he agreed to cross the missions to the North of the Prince Albert diocese in order to administer Confirmation. Therefore, instead of going directly to Green Lake, he went by way of Battleford from whence he directed his steps to Meadow Lake. We have already seen that the road to Meadow Lake was not exactly a pleasant one even in ordinary times (see previous chapter), and in the spring of 1920 the continual rains had caused its lakes and streams to overflow so that the whole country was inundated, bridges were under water, when they had not been swept away, and the road was cut into by gullies while almost its entire length was covered by one or two feet of muddy water which effectively concealed the gullies. In order not to fall into them the Bishop and his companion had to walk nearly all the time in ice-cold water sometimes waist high. Worse yet, the Bishop caught his foot in some obstruction hidden under the water and fell into it full length. He arrived at Meadow Lake soaked from head to foot, and half frozen. Father

Lajeunesse was not much drier, for they had been walking under a beating rain.

Father Waddel, then the director of the Meadow Lake School being taken unawares by the arrival of the Bishop whom he had not expected so soon, asked if he should ring the bell: "No, no, replied the Bishop, go and make a fire, that is more important just now." Thanks to the clothes Father Waddel was able to lend them, the travellers were able to dry themselves. On the following day the Bishop resumed his journey to Green Lake and Beauval after confirming the children of the place.

Setting out from Meadow Lake, one can use a canoe, for there is no lack of water in the Prairie River, nor in the Beaver River, but their position was scarcely more comfortable, for it rained the whole way from Meadow Lake to Green Lake, and again to Beauval. Now it is almost impossible to keep the rain off in a canoe, so our travellers continued soaked and shivering in their wet clothes. Bishop Lajeunesse telling about this journey made in his uncle's company declares that "he never made a more painful journey, not even during the winter."

On his arrival at Beauval the Bishop who was quite tired out, was obliged to go to bed immediately, being attacked by a painful erysipelas, which he bore with a patience that astonished his nurse, Sister Robinson. She made him understand the seriousness of his condition and the anxiety that the want of a doctor caused her in the case of such a patient as himself. "Do not worry, Sister," he replied. "Give me whatever you wish; I have only to obey. Treat me as you would one of your Sisters, or a poor Indian. That" comments the Sister, "made me understand that I was dealing with a real saint, for although the sickness and the treatments were very painful he never complained."

It was the end of June when he returned from this trying journey and he rested a little during July, in his usual way, which was by working hard. Then he had to go to Rome for his visit *ad limina*, and to assist at the General Chapter of the Oblates which was to be held during September. He left on August 13, accompanied by Father Guy, the delegate from the Vicariate to the General Chapter. After the Chapter Father Guy did not return to Keewatin. He had only been lent to the

Vicariate and went back to the Eastern Province to which he belonged. He nevertheless continued to render great services to the missions, and above all to the Indian schools, thanks to the influence he knew how to exert upon the Federal Authorities at Ottawa. His place was filled by Father Bellemare, O.M.I., who was pastor, vicar delegate, and procurator from this time.

The journey to Rome had tired the Bishop exceedingly. Above all it was the return made over a rough sea which exhausted him. He suffered from seasickness during nearly the whole crossing. He rested from this trying journey when he at last returned to Le Pas on December 21, 1921, by setting himself without truce or mercy to the expediting of several important affairs, and the heaped up correspondence that awaited him.

The old Bishop's House-Hospital-Cathedral Building had become the convent of the Presentation Sisters in 1918, as we already know. A single large room in this convent could not serve permanently and indefinitely as a cathedral. It was too inconvenient, both for the Sisters and for the people. For this reason, Father Vézina, O.M.I., who had replaced Father Bellemare as pastor, began the construction of the new cathedral. The works proceeded fast during the summer, and the new building was ready to be opened for worship in September. It is a well proportioned building whose slender steeple dominates the whole town, an edifice worthy to serve as a dwelling place for the Master of the earth. For all that, in order that the memory of the original Bethlehem might be unforgotten they carefully preserved the precious first chapel built by Bishop Charlebois in 1897, and in which he was installed in 1911. It may still be seen behind the new Cathedral.

The solemn dedication of the new building was fixed for September 13. It was a memorable day in the annals of Le Pas. Both the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of Le Pas wished to give the devoted Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin a mark of their admiration and sympathy. Archbishop Beliveau of St. Boniface, metropolitan of Keewatin; Archbishop Mathieu of Regina; Bishop Prud'homme of Prince Albert; Bishop Budka of the Ruthenian Catholics of Canada; the Honorable Mr. Bracken, Premier of Manitoba; Mr. Campbell, Commissary of the Government; and a crowd of priests, religious and distinguished laity arrived by train the day before. Archbishop Beliveau

solemnly blessed the new edifice, and Bishop Charlebois surrounded by a numerous gathering of priests, in the presence of two archbishops, and two bishops, celebrated the first pontifical Mass within its walls. Never before had Le Pas witnessed such a feast, and doubtless it will not do so for a long while. Archbishop Beliveau preached in French, and Bishop Prud'homme in English.

There were a great many speeches at the banquet that followed. Premier Bracken and Mr. Halcrow, Mayor of Le Pas, expressed their appreciation of the valiant Vicar Apostolic, and their admiration for the work he had accomplished for true civilization in the space of only ten years. Archbishop Mathieu of Regina emphasized the happiness caused by the good understanding manifested between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities. Finally, Bishop Charlebois in his eloquently simple allocution, recalled his first arrival at Le Pas in 1887 (see Part II, Chap. I), comparing what then existed with what exists today, thanked God to whom all glory belongs. Detailed accounts of the celebration were given by the papers: *Le Devoir*; *Le Droit*; *La Vérité*; *Le Patriote de l'Ouest*, etc., all of which had sent representatives to the ceremonies.

News came to Le Pas during the April of the following year that several missionaries in the Ile à la Crosse district had been very ill with grippe. This was especially true of Portage La Loche where Fathers Ducharme and Pénard had both been laid up at the same time during several weeks. The Bishop made up his mind to go to them at once in spite of the advanced season, and although he knew that at that season of the year he would meet but a few of the Indians. So it happened that he undertook this journey for the sole purpose of visiting his sick missionaries at Beauval and Ile à la Crosse. He found everybody able to get around again, but the news from Portage La Loche were still bad. They even said that Father Pénard who had been ill all winter was in a dying condition, but this was a little exaggerated.

The journey to Portage La Loche was the most difficult part of this trip, for neither boats nor carriages could make it at that season, and it was almost impossible to go on foot. But the tireless pastor did not hesitate. Walking in frozen water and melting snow, very often, he came through the forest

thickets to surprise the missionaries at Portage La Loche who certainly were not expecting him then. He found Father Pénard who was then going out for the first time since the autumn, warming himself in the sun, and watching the water flow into the little river that ran close by the mission. He was enjoying the afternoon when a Montagnais boy came running and crying out: "Father, the Bishop is at the Mission and asking for you!"

Bishop Charlebois' chief object in making this painful trip was to bring out Father Pénard for a little rest supposing him to be in condition to bear the transportation. But the person interested declared that from the moment he could go out into the sunshine and get warm and watch the water running he would not be long before he could take his gun and get a few ducks, and if that maintained it would complete his convalescence. But the Bishop would not listen to a word, and Father Pénard had to make up his mind to accompany him.

The return trip was made more easily for they were able to go down the La Loche River in a canoe, and as the snow had entirely disappeared from Lakes De Boeuf and Clair, the road across the ice was in good condition. It was only necessary to be careful of the narrow spots, and one would expect the ice on the Creuse River to be not entirely trustworthy, but as long as they could travel over the lakes they thought themselves safe. The Bishop had his train, and Father Pénard had his, each one drawn by good dogs conducted by a half-breed. So they were going in fine style when Father Pénard, who was in the first train, noticed that the dogs were walking in water. He called to the leader who was standing behind him and he immediately stopped the equipage. But in alighting from the train he had felt the ice bending under his weight. He had to lie upon his stomach and crawl through the rising water to go and half turn the dogs. The second leader had done the same for the Bishop's train, but although they took care to keep the two teams apart, as they went on they felt that the ice was bending under the weight of the two trains. It was only after they had gone about two acres that they found solid ice again.

Did the Bishop recognize the danger through which they had just passed? If he did he did not show it, and while his three companions looked at one another pale with the alarm

they felt, he continued to laugh and joke as though nothing had happened.

How was it that they escaped being sucked under the ice? Neither Father Pénard nor the two half-breeds ever understood it and we believe that anyone who knows ice conditions in the spring in that country will not be able to understand it any better. One of the half-breeds said to me recently in speaking of the incident: "If the Bishop had not been with us we should no doubt have gone to the bottom."

Ever since the foundation of the Esquimaux mission, the Bishop had earnestly desired to go and visit the priests who were laboring so heroically in that difficult post. We saw him trying to get there in 1915, but without success. Perhaps the difficulties which had prevented the success of that journey had been providential, for at that time the mission although in existence for three years had been entirely fruitless. The enterprise seemed destined to certain failure, and it is possible that the sight of all the sufferings endured by the two priests, and in appearance so uselessly, might have discouraged the Bishop and decided him to withdraw his missionaries of whom he had so great a need elsewhere. Conditions had greatly changed in 1923. There was then a nucleus of Christians at Chesterfield, still small, but of the first quality, and its future prospects were magnificent.

In addition to his desire to visit this mission of which he was the pastor, Bishop Charlebois had another motive for undertaking this journey which was the ordination of Brother Lionel Ducharme. This young Oblate had gone there the previous year, at the same time as Father Duplain, to go and keep company to Father Turquetil, but he was not yet in sacred orders. Bishop Charlebois wished to go there and confer them upon him. Now the reports concerning this brother in the spring had been discouraging. Together with a few Esquimaux he had gone to get reindeer meat, and he should have returned in from five to six days. At the time of Father Turquetil's letter he had been gone for two weeks, and still there was no news of him. It was then much to be feared that he had been lost in one of the snow-storms which are so terrible in those regions, as happened ten years afterward to poor Father Henry Pigeon. This want of news disquieted the Bishop very

much at the moment of his departure, and kept him in anguish through the whole of his journey.

It was on his return from his trip to Portage La Loche on June 6, that he set out for the Esquimaux country, passing through Montreal.

On the way he heard of the death of his brother Alcide at Ville Marie on June 8. This death caused him much sorrow. Among all his brothers the deceased had been one of those with whom he had been most familiar in his boyhood days. He attended the funeral in the church at Ville Marie on June 12. From there he went to Montreal where he stayed for a few days to prepare for his journey. He embarked upon the Nascopie upon July 14. The Nascopie was then the only boat serving the Hudson Bay posts. He was accompanied by Brother Prime Girard, on his way to rejoin his former companion, Father Turquetil, after a brief absence from Chesterfield. This Brother who had already finished his theological studies, and spoke Esquimaux perfectly, was to be ordained a priest later on.

We find in Bishop Charlebois's notes made upon the road, a detailed account of this journey, notes which were published in a little book entitled "*Chez les Esquimaux*", in the Land of the Esquimaux. We cannot cite all these details here in spite of their surpassing interest. Suffice it to say that the journey was made under unusual conditions as regards comfort and speed. In fact they only took eighteen days to make the trip from Montreal to Chesterfield, whereas it ordinarily occupied thirty days or more.

The Nascopie arrived at Chesterfield on August 1st where His Excellence found Brother Ducharme in perfect condition. His fears had increased at the moment of landing, for not seeing the Brother upon the shore, or rather mistaking him for an Esquimaux because of his low stature, the Bishop had believed that he was wanting from the roll call. His joy was then proportionately greater when he found himself able to embrace him.

The Bishop had scarcely disembarked when a tempest arose that was so violent as to compel the Nascopie to remain at anchor in the open sea for three days, without the possibility of unloading the ship. "Had we arrived but one hour later," wrote the Bishop, "we should not have been able to land. God has arranged everything for the best." (*Chez les Esquimaux*.)

Under the circumstances this storm which delayed the unloading of the boat prolonged the Bishop's visit to his missionaries just that much. It was again an attention of Providence.

But there was no time to be lost. From the day following his arrival, thanks to a special indult, the Bishop conferred the two orders of sub-deacon and deacon upon Brother Ducharme. On the third he ordained him a priest for all eternity. All the Christian Esquimaux, and even many of the pagans, assisted at the ordination ceremonies and were very attentive to them; their significance was explained to them by Father Turquetil.

There were eleven adult baptisms in the afternoon of the same day, and ten children. "Never before in my life," wrote Bishop Charlebois, "had I seen myself in the presence of so great a number of pagans to be baptized. My happiness was great indeed. During the ceremony Father Turquetil explained the significance of each rite. I was astonished to see how every one, even the young children of six or seven replied to the questions with faith and certainty. They all presented their foreheads with joy to receive the regenerating waters." (*Chez les Esquimaux*, p. 21.)

The storm continued until Saturday, August 4 so it was not until then that the Nascopie could begin to discharge her cargo. This operation took two days, and that permitted His Excellency to spend the Sunday with his missionaries and his Christians at Chesterfield. They had a pontifical Mass that day with little Esquimaux servers who acquitted themselves of their functions with as much ease and intelligence as though they had done nothing else all their lives. The Bishop administered Baptism again in the afternoon to three women and two children. That brought the total number of Esquimaux baptisms to forty-one. It was not a large number, but the movement was now fairly under way and many more conversions appeared to be on the way for the near future. After the baptismal ceremony nineteen persons were confirmed. (*Chez les Esquimaux*, pp. 21-22.)

This visitation made it clear to Bishop Charlebois that three more missions were necessary, and these should be at Baker Lake, Repulse Bay, and Esquimaux Point, the latter was the more urgent because of the intrigues of the Protestant ministers. But subjects and resources were wanting. For all



that, the foundation at Esquimaux Point, a hundred and forty miles North of Churchill, was decided upon for the following summer.

In testifying to the needs and difficulties of these farflung missions, Bishop Charlebois said shortly after his return: "It is too far, and too difficult of access for me. They should have a Bishop of their own for their good direction and development; or a prefect apostolic who would reside in the country itself. But as things are, we shall have to wait a long while for that." However, this realization, no matter how improbable it looked to human eyes, was not so far away in the designs of Providence as the good Bishop supposed.

He left Chesterfield on board the *Nascopie* on August 6, but whatever may be said about that, he did not return to Montreal upon the boat for he left her at Churchill situated at the mouth of the Churchill River. Churchill supplanting Port Nelson a few years afterward became the great port of Hudson Bay, and the terminal point of the railway from Le Pas, but in 1923 it was only an unimportant trading post. Bishop Charlebois met with an Anglican bishop there who was on his way to visit Esquimaux Point. That encounter showed the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin that he must hurry the establishment of a mission at that point if he did not wish to be forestalled by the Protestant.

Bidding farewell to the *Nascopie*, he embarked upon a "schooner", a sailing vessel which took him to York Factory. From there on, August 15, he went by cutter and experienced every imaginary trouble in rounding the famous point where he had lost his ring in 1915 and walked some fifteen miles in mud and water. He came at length to the Nelson River which he ascended as far as La Chaudière-Rapid, 332 miles from Le Pas. It was still, as in 1917 the end of the railroad to Le Pas, but the train service was irregular and the Bishop had to make the greater part of the journey in a motor-car, a small gasoline-driven car running upon the rails. It took eight days to cover the three hundred and thirty-two miles in this machine, and he did not arrive at Le Pas until August 28.

He was enabled to fulfill the dream of his first years of missionary life in December by establishing a resident missionary at Nelson-House. (See Part II, chap. 2.) He sent Father

The Beauval School  
(1938).



General view  
of Beauval.



Bishops Charlebois  
and Prud'homme,  
Beauval, 1927





Church and presbytery at Portage  
La Loche Mission June 1924.



Bishop Charlebois'  
last visit to  
Portage La Loche  
(1930).



Residence of the  
Fathers, Portage La  
Loche (1938).

Trudeau there who had finished his theological studies at the Edmonton scholasticate in the previous year. Until that time this mission had been served by the missionary in charge of Pakitawagan.

The period of Bishop Charlebois' episcopate which we have recorded above was certainly an eventful one. But it was calm when we compare it with the recital of the one we shall meet with in the following chapter, where we shall see the most terrible trials mingling with the sweetest consolations.

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## CHAPTER V

### **Trials and Consolations (1923-1930)**

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Bishop Charlebois had already had to suffer many trials from the very beginning of his episcopate. The death of the youthful Father Le Blanc, and the first fire at Ile à la Crosse, among others, without taking count of the death of his sister Alma, and his brothers Alcide and Procule. But a new series of trials which were to be almost uninterrupted for seven years began in the last month of 1923. Nevertheless these trials were mingled with a few consolations of which the most efficacious was derived from his own spirit of faith.

The first of these trials was the drowning occurred at Ile à la Crosse during the last days of September 1923. The children of the school had gone for a picnic with the object of gathering wild fruit in the woods. The little girls were with some of the Sisters in a large skiff propelled by a gasoline engine driven by Father Rossignol, the director of the mission. The little boys under the care of Sister Nadeau were in a large boat which the skiff was towing. This boat unfortunately came against a stake that was planted at the bottom of the lake and the top of which was hidden under the water, a part of some snares that had been set. The violence of the shock added to the swiftness of the moving skiff capsized the boat and broke the tow line which attached it to the skiff which came immediately behind, but they could retrieve only five of the little boys. Three of their companions as well as the Sister went down, probably struck by congestion, for the accident took place after dinner. When they were taken from the water, they were dead.

This terrible accident was a bitter blow to Bishop Charlebois. He wrote to the Superior General of the Grey Nuns of Montreal on October 1: "A very sad telegram came to us today

from Ile à la Crosse. You must have received one like it. It is that Sister Nadeau was drowned with three of her pupils. I understand your sorrow at the loss of a Sister who was so young, so capable, and so promising for the future. And it was in such a short time, and in so tragic a manner! I have a great share in your sorrow. Certainly I submit to the will of God, but I cannot help regretting this loss. With you, I shall console myself by praying for the repose of her soul."

The excitement caused by the above painful accident was hardly calmed when a new cause for weeping broke over the Keewatin Vicariate, and the Grey Nuns Community. Toward the middle of November, Sister St. Nazaire, the aunt of Sr. Nadeau, former superior of Ile à la Crosse, and at that time superior of the Beauval Convent, was carried off by a species of typhoid fever, which for the last year had run over the country and claimed many victims. Before dying the Sister had said: "It is enough, this sickness will take no more victims", and as a matter of fact she was the last to die from this epidemic, which ceased after her death.

When the news of this last sorrow came to him, Bishop Charlebois wrote to the Superior General: "The good God has not deigned to hear us; He has taken the good, the holy Sister St. Nazaire. What a trial for the Beauval School! What a loss for your Community! What a loss for our Indian Missions! She was so well identified with this work! This death following the drowning at Ile à la Crosse leaves us with broken hearts."

Father Vézina who had been recalled to Manitoba was replaced at Le Pas by Father Paquet (Elzear). The latter who was very devoted and zealous would have rendered the greatest service for many years. Unhappily, being of feeble health he succumbed before long to the task.

During the spring of 1924, the Montagnais mission of Boeuf River, which until then had been served partly, by the missionaries of Portage La Loche, and partly, by those of Ile à la Crosse, received its resident missionary in the person of Father Moraud.


The Keewatin Vicariate made a precious acquisition during the summer of the same year, when Father Adam (Médéric), came from the East to try and reestablish his health which was ravaged by an incompletely cured consumption. The Western

climate proved favorable to him, and he rendered inestimable service as professor and moderator at the Beauval Scholasticate. Bishop Charlebois had a singular appreciation for his learning and devotedness, and depended much upon him.

The foundation of the new mission at Esquimaux Point took place in the autumn of 1924. It was placed under the protection of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus. It was located half way between Churchill and Chesterfield. This foundation had been decided upon at the time of Bishop Charlebois' visit to the Esquimaux country in the preceding year. (See Chap. IV.) The building was constructed with the old lumber of a police building at Churchill, which the Government had given to Bishop Charlebois. They transported this lumber to Esquimaux Point, and Father Ducharme and Brother Girard built themselves a house in a hurry in which they installed themselves as best they could for the winter. During this time Father Turquetil had gone to represent the Vicariate of Keewatin at the Missionary Exhibition in Rome, and the young Father Honoré Pigeon, a nephew of Bishop Charlebois, had gone as companion to Father Duplain at Chesterfield.

While the Esquimaux missionaries were thus occupied, the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin had gone to Eastern Canada in search of alms with which to found the two other Esquimaux missions already spoken of. (Chap. IV.) Among other things he charged Madame Beauregard to have raffled a fur cloak, given to him by Canon Pelletier, which he considered too handsome to wear. In several letters that he wrote at this time, we find him begging his benefactresses to hurry, for these foundations in the Esquimaux country had become urgent because of the activity of the Protestants. The latter, until that time utterly indifferent to the salvation of the Esquimaux, had all at once become filled with zeal to undo the work of the Catholic missionaries. Not having succeeded in getting to Esquimaux Point first, they wanted to go to Baker Lake and Repulse Bay, and settle in those places. It was all a question of who made the first settlement, for, "should they get there before us," wrote Bishop Charlebois, "it will be very difficult to dislodge them".

He gathered a considerable sum of money for these two foundations which after all he did not make himself, for the Congregation of Propaganda separated the Hudson Bay missions





from the Vicariate of Keewatin in the spring of 1935, making them into a prefecture apostolic which was confided to Father Turquetil. Looked at from a purely human point of view, this mission appeared to be prematurely founded, but on the other hand it was established so rapidly, and so much against the customary slowness of the Roman Congregations, that one can only think of it as a direct intervention of Divine Providence.

Thus the Bishop, a little surprised at first by the suddenness of the event, and a little hurt over the loss of his dear Esquimaux to whom he had already become attached, delayed not to accept the ruling of Rome as a manifestation of the divine will, and he heartily accepted what he had himself desired as greatly favoring the development of these missions, and which has in fact done so, as can be seen by the event.

He therefore sent all the money he had collected to the new prefect apostolic for those missions. It amounted to \$6,800, which added to the alms received directly by Bishop Turquetil himself permitted him to found the two missions in question; and to prepare for the establishment of others.

Bishop Charlebois had another attack of erysipelas in the spring of 1925 during the confirmation tour he was making in the diocese of Montreal. It obliged him to make a rather long stay at the Hotel Dieu, and as he returned to Le Pas before he was perfectly recovered he had to go to the hospital there for a few days to complete his cure.

Meanwhile the Vicar Apostolic had not forgotten the anxiety of the old Cumberland Missionary relative to the education of the Indian children of that district. (See Part II, Chap. III.) The negotiations opened with the Government for the erection of a boarding school in Cumberland had thus far been prosecuted at irregular intervals, and without result. Father Guy who in his new position at the University of Ottawa had not forgotten the missions of Keewatin in whose interest he had worked so hard while procurator at Le Pas, intervened in the spring of 1925 in their favor, and with success. The building of this school which was to be done at the Government's expense began, not at Cumberland itself but about thirty miles further North, at Sturgeon Landing, on the shore of Lake Sturgeon, close beside the mouth of the river of the same name, the river so often met with in the stories of old time travellers

of the Hudson Bay Company, under the disagreeable name of "Bad River." This situation was selected as more central than Cumberland for the Indians whose children were to live at the school.

Out of gratitude for the good offices of Father Guy in promoting this project, it was agreed between the Government and Bishop Charlebois that the new establishment should be called "The Guy School".

In the beginning of February 1926 Bishop Charlebois went to Beauval to celebrate the centenary of the foundation and of the approbation of the rules of the Oblates. He had determined to preside at the annual retreat of the Fathers and Brothers of the Ile à la Crosse, which retreat was to serve as a preparation for the centennial celebration, and also for the ordination of the Scholastic Brother Lavoie, upon whom the Bishop intended to confer the priesthood, in the church at Ile à la Crosse, upon the Sunday following the celebration.

As February 17 of that year fell upon Ash Wednesday, the celebration was relegated to the following day, February 18. The next day, February 19, the Community took breakfast joyfully at Beauval, and a whole convoy made ready to set out for Ile à la Crosse to assist at the ordination.

"We were just starting off," wrote Bishop Charlebois, "when a telegram arrived with the news that the convent of that mission was on fire. What a blow! What consternation! What a trial! How quickly tears had followed upon our overwhelming joy. Every heart was pierced with sorrow. Father Rossignol the director of the poor Ile à la Crosse Mission had come to Beauval to make his retreat with us. I went alone with him to the scene of the disaster. What a disaster! Nothing remained but smoking ruins. The Sisters and children were crowded together in the home of the missionaries. The fire was caused by an overheated pipe and broke out at five o'clock in the morning when everyone was in bed. Thank God, there was no loss of life! This is the second time that this convent has become the prey of fire in six years. The loss is total because the Insurance Company would not accept any risk in these remote missions. This trial was a severe shock to my courage, I even thought it might be better not to rebuild. But God showed us our cowardice and want of confidence in Providence. We

therefore decided to rebuild in the following year. In conclusion I beg the alms of your good prayers as well as some charitable alms".

There was no longer any question of ordaining Brother Lavoie at Ile à la Crosse; he was ordained in the chapel of the Indian School at Beauval.

Bishop Charlebois had the consolation of opening a new mission at Island Lake, as it were in compensation for the Ile à la Crosse disaster. This was an entirely new district where the Methodists had already established themselves, a hundred and fifty miles to the east of Norway-House. Father Dubeau, who with two lay brothers had resided at Norway-House, went to the new place in April 1926 to build a chapel and house combined. It was inaugurated by the Bishop in the beginning of July. The Indians were well disposed toward the Catholic faith. Father Dubeau had already instructed a few of them in the course of his previous visits, and he had disposed them to abjure Methodism. Thus His Excellency was enabled to receive twenty-six converts. It was the first Catholic nucleus in that mission, and it expanded quickly so that the new Catholics numbered a hundred and seven at the end of the year, with several more Protestants taking instructions. These prospects overwhelmed the heart of their zealous pastor with joy.

Unfortunately this mission was very difficult of access. It took the Bishop fifteen days to get there, and the journey had to be made over impossible roads so that he arrived very much worn out. Supplies were going to be difficult both in obtaining and in price. In order to make sure of its future the Bishop put this new mission under the patronage of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus.

Another very great consolation that came to the heart of the Apostolic Vicar of Keewatin was the arrival of seven Sisters of St. Joseph, from the Mother-House in St. Hyacinthe, who had come to look after the "Guy School" at Sturgeon Landing. This is the school the beginnings of which we watched in the previous year. The Sisters arrived at Le Pas on September 7, and embarked upon the "Nipawin" to go and take possession of their new post by ascending the Saskatchewan and crossing Lake Cumberland and Lake Sturgeon.

The Bishop accompanied them to see them installed. But this installation was rather unsatisfactory. Thanks to the slowness and neglect so often found in government directed works, which was the case with this construction, nothing was ready or finished though everything ought to have been done by the end of August. The Sisters and children had to install themselves as best they could among the workmen who crowded the house. There were not even beds, nor dishes, and mistresses and pupils had to sleep upon the ground for several weeks. It was December before it was all finished. Father Doyon had charge of this school.

Brothers François Gagnon and Irénée Gauthier, of the Beauval Scholasticate were ordained at the Cathedral of Le Pas, during the January of 1927. Father Chamberland, also from Beauval, had been ordained in the East during the previous summer. These three priests would not complete their theological studies until the following June. The same applies to Father Lavoie who had been ordained in the previous January, as we saw before. That meant the promise of four more missionaries for the Vicariate.

But the year 1927 which had opened so auspiciously, proved on the contrary one of great trials and disasters.

The first sorrow came with the death of Miss Anna Birs who had been the Bishop's housekeeper since 1912. She was a model manager who noiselessly, and so to speak invisibly, watched over everything. She took complete charge of the kitchen, linen, and good order in the interior of the house. She was a holy soul who without having made profession practised all the virtues of the religious life. She died peacefully on January 12 after a long illness borne with patience. Her death was a great loss to Bishop Charlebois.

A still more painful loss came to him a few weeks afterward in the death of Father Paquet on February 4. This Father had been the Bishop's right hand ever since his arrival at Le Pas in December 1923. His health was already broken when he arrived, but for all that he had done as much work as two strong men, acting as parish priest, vicar-delegate, and procurator for the missions. But his weak health very soon obliged the Bishop to relieve him of the charge of administrator of the Cathedral, and give it to Father Marchand, while he retained the cares of the

administration of the Vicariate and the procuratorship. The former charge during the long and frequent absences of the Bishop being still too heavy a charge for him, violent hemorrhages during January 1927 obliged him to retire to the hospital where he died February 4.

The death of Father Paquet left the Bishop and Father Marchand alone. He was a secular priest who had come to Le Pas<sup>128</sup> right after ordination in 1919. Since then, as vicar of the Cathedral, and sometimes acting as procurator for the missions, he had never failed to render the most important services. In 1926 he was named pastor of the Cathedral Parish, a charge that he still holds and one that the vigor of his constitution seems to promise that he will continue to hold for many a long year to come, for the greater good of the Le Pas parishoners. The death of Father Paquet made it necessary for him to undertake, in addition to his work as pastor, those of procurator of the missions, and vicar-delegate, functions which he fulfilled until the time when Father Martin Lajeunesse came to relieve him of them.

The last months of Father Paquet's life had been spent in overlooking the constructive works at the new Bishop's House. This work had been begun in the summer of 1926 and the building was nearly finished at the time of his death. There remained only the last fitting up of the interior to be done. Bishop Charlebois was able to move into his new residence on March 3.

We read in the *Le Pas Codex*: "For the first time in the seventeen years since he became a bishop, he can say that he is at home. Until now he has resided in different places. In 1911 he lived in a poor native hut; he spent several months in a part of the present hospital. On the arrival of the Grey Nuns, April 3, 1912, he moved into the building now occupied by the Presentation Sisters. He dwelt in the basement and the first floor while the upper part of the building did duty as a cathedral. On the arrival of the Presentation Sisters in 1918, the Bishop retired to an annex they had just built against the hospital, and there he stayed until March 1927." (*Codex*, 2, pp. 91-92.)

Bishop Charlebois wrote to one of his benefactresses, Madame Beauregard, a few days after his installation in the

new Bishop's House. "It is not a castle, but a suitable house." There was assuredly no luxury in that Bishop's House which might be likened to a fine presbytery, but in order to make it such as it is, his assistants were compelled to almost do him violence. He thought it was too expensive, and he would not have any furniture that was not absolutely necessary in his private apartments. There was just a desk, his bed, and a few chairs. He would not have anything more.

He went as usual on the day after Easter, April 18, to assist in the administration of Confirmation in the diocese of Montreal. He took advantage of this trip, as he habitually did, to collect alms, and also, and more than all, to work to obtain a priest who would be able to act as his vicar general and procurator in the place of the lamented Father Paquet. But in spite of every effort he could not find anyone. And what was worse, he himself became ill during his work at the confirmations, and was obliged to spend two weeks at the Hotel Dieu, and return home without having received any great alms. This journey that had been so fatiguing for him, had also been almost fruitless.

Meanwhile, Father Martin Lajeunesse who had been directing the Beauval school had become very worn out, so that he had gone to Le Pas on April 9 for a rest, and to be taken care of. He was preparing to return to Beauval although he was not entirely well, when the Bishop came home. He told him to remain at the Bishop's House, and gave him charge of procurator, and provisional vicar-delegate, until he could get some one else. The appointment lasted for six years, until Father Martin was consecrated coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin, with the right of succession, in 1933.

No sooner had he returned from the East than the indefatigable bishop began to regulate his correspondence and settle all the more urgent business. On June 18 he started out to make his visitation of the western missions. Bishop Prud'homme who had long desired to visit the missions, joined him at Prince Albert, and the two went on together to Ile à la Crosse to inaugurate the new convent building which had just been finished to replace the one destroyed in the fire of the preceding year.

The inauguration had taken place and everyone was rejoicing, when Father Ducharme came from Portage La Loche to report that on the preceding Sunday, June 19, the presbytery had taken fire while they were all at the high Mass. The house was completely destroyed by the flames; they had saved nothing. The two priests, Father Ducharme and Father Pioger, and Brother Lefevre had only the clothes they were wearing at the time of the fire. They had been obliged to sleep in an Indian hut, and borrow some blankets for the night.

This news changed their joy into sadness, but neither Father Ducharme nor the Bishop were discouraged. They decided that the presbytery must be rebuilt immediately, and in fact during his visitation at Portage La Loche a few days afterward, the Bishop courageously took all the necessary steps for the beginning of the work in the early spring.

On his return from this trip, our missionary bishop went to visit the scattered Christians along the lines of the Hudson Bay railroad. In the evening of August 15, he set out in a boat for Sturgeon Landing to be present at the solemn inauguration of the Guy School. We have already seen that this school had opened in the preceding autumn but without any ceremony. The travellers were accompanied by a heavy rain as far as Cumberland, where the two younger ones arrived quite exhausted, while the Bishop seemed as though he were taking a pleasure trip. The weather from Cumberland to Sturgeon Landing was quite fine and unmarked by any incident.

The solemn blessing of the new school took place on August 18, together with the inauguration of the school amid a large gathering of Indians, in the presence of the agent for the natives, and a large number of missionaries from the neighboring posts. Among those present were two former collaborators of the Vicar Apostolic at Le Pas, Fathers Vézina and Guy. The last mentioned, in whose honor the new school had been named, had also powerfully assisted in its erection.

Meanwhile in spite of the secret wire-pulling of the Methodists, the Government had finally authorized the opening of a small boarding school at Norway-House, and the Grey Nuns from Montreal who were already in charge of the hospital at Le Pas, had agreed to take charge of it. Three Sisters had started out from Le Pas to open this school in June 1927, they were

Sisters Brault, Pelletier, and Lajeunesse. Sisters St. Eugénie and Sophie were to join them at the end of October, but as mistresses and pupils were housed only in a temporary place that was very miserable, it would be necessary to build an establishment capable of housing thirty boarders. The Bishop decided to go there to select a site, and to take advantage of the trip to visit his Christians along the Saskatchewan, and push on toward Cross Lake.

Accompanied by Father Trudeau, director of the Cross Lake School, who had come to assist at the inauguration of the Sturgeon Landing School, he set out on August 24. They were alone in a motor boat, and lost themselves upon Cedar Lake which made them lose considerable time, so that when they arrived at Grand Rapids they discovered that the boat in which they should have crossed Lake Winnipeg had already gone, and that there would be no more that autumn. So they were compelled to risk making the trip alone in their little motor boat. After leaving Grand Rapids they fell across bad weather. On the afternoon of the third day they were still twenty miles from Mossy Point which marks the end of Lake Winnipeg and on the other side of which they would find shelter. But in order to reach it they must skirt a perpendicular cliff which afforded no opportunity of landing, in such bad weather they could not take the risk.

As the wind died down at sunset, the Bishop thought they might continue their journey. Father Trudeau considered that they would be taking a dangerous risk during the night beside this unapproachable cliff, for, were the wind to spring up again, it would be difficult to escape from the waves in the darkness, while there was no place to land upon. The Bishop's idea prevailed and they started off. It was already dark; quite dark after an hour's sailing. Then the wind freshened again coming from the open water, that is to say from a clear sweep of two hundred miles. The waves soon became enormous. There was no landing place within their reach, and to make matters worse the motor stopped. There was no more gasoline in the reservoir. It was impossible to refill it with the wind blowing, and in the darkness, and the poor boat no longer steering, was carried by a huge wave and thrown against the cliff which was happily clay at that point. If it had been of



rock the boat must have broken up. It was intact, but that was about all.

The two poor shipwrecked men with their feet in the water and covered at every moment by the waves breaking over them from the open and threatening to carry them and their boat away, worked hard to keep it there. Presently they noticed a little hollow about three or four feet above the water level of the lake where their baggage would be in safety. Finally, and with considerable effort they succeeded in getting it there. Then they tried to haul up the boat, but failing in this, they tied it to a tree which they happily found near, and left it thus, suspended against the cliff.

They could not camp there themselves. They had to climb to the top of this almost perpendicular cliff. It was not easy in the dark of the night and loaded as they were with their wet blankets, but they finally reached the top in God knows what condition, soaked to the skin and covered with mud. They hoped to kindle a good fire and dry themselves a little, but they found no wood at the top of the cliff, so, weary and exhausted, they had to lie down in their wet clothes, and wrap themselves in their wet blankets.

Their very fatigue made them sleep a little. When they awakened in the morning, they found that calm had returned but they also discovered that a great part of their belongings had been carried off by the waves during their hurried landing in the dark. Among their other losses was that of nearly all their gasoline. There remained only a small quantity at the bottom of a barrel that they had thought empty. However that was enough to take them to the next store which was at the mouth of the Nelson River.

From there to Norway-House, and from Norway-House to Cross Lake the voyage was made without further incident. The Bishop went from Cross Lake to the 185 mile post upon the Hudson Bay railroad line, where he took the train for Le Pas arriving there on September 20 in an exhausted condition. The news that greeted him on his arrival at the station was not calculated to restore his strength.

A few moments before his arrival a telegram had been received at the Bishop's House announcing that a fire had broken out during the night 19-20 of September at the Indian School

at Beauval, and that a Sister and nineteen of the little boys had perished in the flames.

The fire was discovered between eleven o'clock and midnight and had evidently been started by criminal hands, for they discovered three starting places, which explains why the dormitory in which were the smallest children under the supervision of Sister Lea was surrounded by the flames before the alarm was given. When they tried to reach them the poor little boys had already disappeared in the fire, an interior staircase by which they might have reached safety gave way under them.

This news added to the fatigue experienced during his journey to Cross Lake overwhelmed Bishop Charlebois and prevented him from sleeping for several nights. He wrote to Father William on September 21: "I returned yesterday from visiting the distant missions of Norway-House and Cross Lake. The going was bad: we nearly perished twice upon Lake Winnipeg. I am worn out, exhausted. It is two hours after midnight; I am writing because I cannot sleep. That is because I am still under the shock of a terrible trial. Our big Indian School at Beauval fell a prey to the flames last night at midnight. One dormitory<sup>2</sup> was surrounded by the fire, a religious and nineteen little boys have perished. The loss of these lives has broken my heart. I weep, I weep in spite of myself. It is only rarely that a misfortune has affected me so profoundly.... I willingly kiss the hand of the good God Who tries me, but nature cannot help feeling the blow, and bewailing it."

Happily, they had saved the scholasticate building at Beauval, and fortunately they were actually engaged in building an addition to it. After the fire the Sisters and their pupils went there to lodge in the addition. They installed themselves as best they could, badly rather than well, for nothing there was finished. They sent all the children who lived near enough back to their homes, keeping only the orphans and those whose parents lived too far away. The Sisters continued to teach these children while awaiting the rebuilding of the school.

The Government, unfortunately, was not in a hurry. They had to rebuild at the cost of the Vicariate with the promise that the Government would reimburse them later on, under the condition that it approved their plans and expenditures. That slowed down the work and it was not until the beginning of

1932 that the classes were able to open again in the new school, although the Chapel, basement with the kitchen, lavatory, furnaces etc. had been finished in 1930.

The new school was a fine brick, fireproof building. The bricks were made on the ground, but it was not until long afterward that Bishop Charlebois was reimbursed for the expenses incurred by the mission for the construction of this school. Naturally there was no question of interest for the sums advanced. The Government paid about a hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars for this building. If the Government had done the work itself it would certainly have cost more than two hundred thousand dollars, for, for a small hospital it built at Ile à la Crosse, one that the local workmen would have built for less than twenty thousand dollars, it paid more than for the Beauval school.

But God, Who always mingles consolations with the trials that He sends to His servants, poured a precious balm upon the open wound made by the Beauval catastrophe in the Bishop's heart. This was the proclamation of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus as Special Patron of all Missionaries, both men and women, and of all the missions existing throughout the world, in the same title and with the same liturgical privileges as St. Francis Xavier."

This great event was no doubt primarily the work of God Who willed to glorify Himself by glorifying His humble servant, and to encourage the missionaries by giving them a powerful Protectress in Heaven. It is no less true that the instruments of whom He made use to promote this work were the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin, and an unassuming Christian of the Province of Quebec, Monsieur Paul A. Lionel Bernard, of Belœil.

Monsieur Bernard had a great devotion to the little Teresa of Lisieux long before her canonization. He had worked hard to get signatures to a petition to the Holy Father for her beatification, and the Vicariate of Keewatin had supplied several hundred signatures of missionaries and Indians, both Crees and Montagnais. After her canonization in 1925, he worked at getting the Canadian Ordinaries to sign an address of thanks to the Sovereign Pontiff. Several archbishops and bishops had already signed this address when, toward the end of May, he

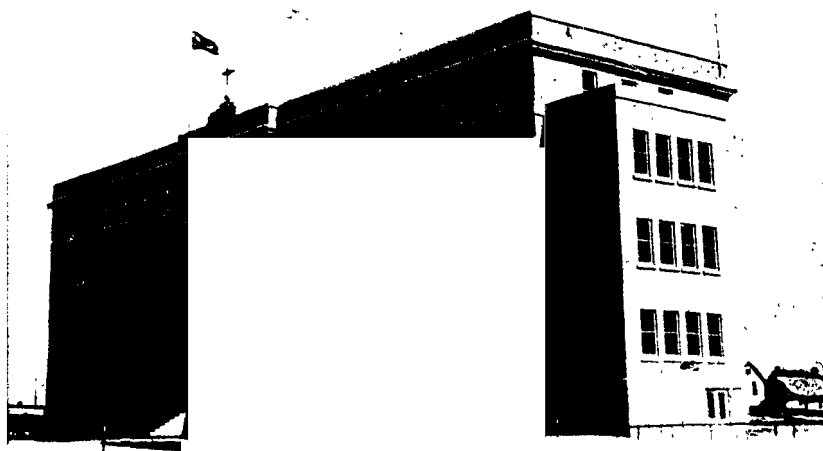


- 1 Most Rev Father J. Pietsch,  
assistant to the Superior General
- 2 Bishop O Charlebois
3. Rev Father J M Penard  
O M I., author of this book



**The five brothers:**

- 1 Jean, secular priest, dead.
- 2 William, O.M.I.
- 3 Ovide, O.M.I.
- 4 Charles, O.M.I.
- 5 Emmanuel, secular priest, dead



Le Pas Hospital,  
Bishop Charlebois' deed



A fine meal  
on a mission tour



Awaiting supper hour,  
Bishop Charlebois  
goes trolling.



Bishop Charlebois visits  
Father Dubeau, O.M.I.,  
isolated priest at Island  
Lake.

met Bishop Charlebois in Montreal. He knew very well the devotion of the venerable prelate for the little saint, and that he had seconded the petition for her beatification with all his might, and thus he had no misgivings about obtaining his signature; he was convinced that he would give it with enthusiasm.

It came therefore as a painful surprise when on the presentation of the address, Bishop Charlebois replied: "I will not sign that." And to the repeated solicitations of Monsieur Bernard he still replied: "No." Then after a silence: "See here, as for writing to the Pope, I would ask him for something." "And what would you ask for, Excellency?" "I would ask him to proclaim St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus Patroness of the Missions and the Missionaries." "There, Excellency, you have an incomparable subject for supplication, but if you will permit me to express my own thought it is a question that concerns only the mission episcopate. Your Excellency, please sign my address, it must not go to Rome without your signature, that would grieve your little Teresa and her Carmelite Sisters. I will undertake to do the work of the petition for the missionaries."

Upon this promise Bishop Charlebois signed the address, and immediately afterward he set to work with his "secretary." A petition drawn up by them asked the Sovereign Pontiff to proclaim the new saint special Patroness of the missionaries. Within a few months the petition had received the signatures of all the Canadian Ordinaries who had Indian missions within their territories. There were twelve signatories. The petition was sent to Rome in January 1926 and Cardinal Sincero undertook to present it to the Holy Father. The presentation was to take place during March. Cardinal Sincero gave an account of his mission in these words:

"His Holiness received the petition with great kindness, and advised me to approach Cardinal Von Rossum, Prefect of Propaganda, and then Cardinal Vico, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites."

Cardinal Von Rossum was very pleased with this praiseworthy initiative. Then he asked if St. Teresa was to be named Patroness of the Canadian Missions only, or of all the missions in the world. In the second case "it seems to me that is what you

wish." His Eminence suggested the gathering of the concurrence of the French, Italian, Belgian, etc. missions, in such a way that all the missions would be represented in this plebiscite in favor of the heavenly patron of missionaries.

That was actually what Bishop Charlebois did want. So in April he set his benevolent secretary to work and made him correspond with all the Ordinaries of the world who exercised their apostolate among infidels, heretics, or schismatics, begging them to be so kind as to add their signatures to those of the Ordinaries of the Canadian North.

Two hundred and twenty signatures from Mission Ordinaries in all countries from the Poles to the equator, of all rites, and every language, came to M. Bernard generally accompanied by enthusiastic letters singing in every tone the praises and celebrating the benefits of the "Little Sower of Roses". Several of these prelates had caused their own signatures to be supplemented by those of an imposing array of their missionaries. All these signatures, added to those of the Canadian Ordinaries above mentioned, came to the substantial figure of two hundred and thirty-two. It was almost a Council.

All these signatures were gathered into a magnificent volume artistically written and superbly illuminated by Reverend Mother Mary of the Incarnation, of the Ursulines of Three Rivers. This volume was sent to Cardinal Sincero who handed it to His Holiness on October 14, 1927. He found it very beautiful and was much moved at the number of signatories, and their expressions, and he promised that he himself would be the advocate of the case with the Congregations of Rites and of Propaganda.

But it was a question of getting those two Roman Congregations to accept the petition. It was easy to foresee difficulties. Think of it! A woman Patron of the Missions! It was so contrary to all traditions and accepted forms. But the Little Teresa did not permit herself to be caught in the snares of procedure; she led things in a big way, and according to her own manner. Had she not already made a conquest of His Holiness Pius XI?

Now it happened that in spite of the wishes of the Pope the two Congregations voted against the petition: Propaganda unanimously, while at the Congregation of Rites there was no

one to give a favorable vote except the Cardinal Prefect. The cause appeared lost but Pius XI abrogated the decisions of the two Congregations, and it was he himself who drew up the decree which proclaimed "Saint Teresa of the Infant Jesus special Patroness of the Missionaries and the Missions, in the same title as St. Francis Xavier."

The decree was not promulgated solemnly until December 14, but the decision had been taken at the end of November. Bishop Charlebois was informed of it in a personal letter from Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State to His Holiness. The Bishop hastened to communicate the good news to the faithful of his Vicariate by a circular letter of November 30, 1937. (Cir. 28.) His faithful secretary tells us: "Bishop Charlebois' joy was boundless and manifested itself by sweet tears." They were tears of gratitude to God and His Vicar. It was certainly one of the greatest joys of his life, a consolation for past trials, and a source of strength for those that would not be long in coming upon him."

The Le Pas hospital now was no longer large enough for all the patients who presented themselves for treatment. The continuation of the railroad from Winnipeg to Hudson Bay the construction of which had been so long interrupted, and which they finally decided to continue to Churchill, had put hundreds and hundreds of workmen on their tracks. Besides, the discoveries of gold and copper mines in the Churchill basin, and the construction of branch lines toward the principal mines, Flin-Flon and Sherridon, and the construction work necessary for the housing of the machinery destined for the working of these mines; the construction of a great electric factory at Island Falls; all brought thousands of workmen into the country, and in case of illness or accident, there was only the hospital at Le Pas to take care of them. Therefore it had now become entirely insufficient.

In the beginning of 1928 it was decided to build a new hospital, not a frame building this time but a fireproof one built with bricks. It was decided at the same time to enlarge the school which had also become too small to receive all the Catholic children. These two buildings were soon begun. Work started in the spring of 1928 and both buildings were finished in the following year. On May 24, 1929, the two buildings were



inaugurated in presence of the Premier of Manitoba, The Honorable Mr. Bracken, and of Monsieur Prefontaine, Minister of Agriculture.

These two buildings completed the series of edifices owing to the initiative of Bishop Charlebois at Le Pas. On his arrival there as Vicar Apostolic, there was nothing at all there; eighteen years afterward there was a suitable Bishop's House, a beautiful Cathedral, a Convent, a large Catholic School, and a splendid four-story Hospital equipped with every modern medical and surgical improvement, and capable of taking care of a hundred patients. To this enumeration we add a fairly large Parish Hall, built in Father Guy's time.

The rapid development of the country could not fail to be a source of embarrassment from the point of view of religious services. Agglomerations of men were forming all along the Hudson Bay's line among whom were Catholics side by side with men of no faith, and these were of every language. They were evidently very much exposed to the danger of losing their faith. It was the same at Flin-Flon, Cranberry, Sherridon and Island Falls. In order to provide for the spiritual needs of these stray sheep there was only the personnel at the Bishop's House; a personnel generally non-existent for the greater part of the time, and who had the care of the Indians and half-breeds scattered along the Saskatchewan, and settled at Barrows, in the Winnipeg Line. This condition caused much thought to the old missionary Bishop. But what could he do? There were no more workmen to cultivate the Lord's vineyard.

Father Lussier who came out from Toronto in 1928 tried to establish himself at Flin-Flon, but the ill will of the mine owners in refusing him the land upon which to build a church and presbytery discouraged him, and he returned without accomplishing anything. Father Gauthier, who had recently come from Beauval scholasticate, and was charged with the care of the Catholics scattered along the Hudson Bay Line, had to add the missions of Cranberry, Flin-Flon, and the distant settlement of Barrows to his cares. He built chapels at Mile 185, on the Churchill Line, and also at Cranberry and Flin-Flon, but being all alone he could evidently not give a very complete service in so many places. It would have employed many priests to do that. But most of all a Polish-speaking priest was needed, be-

cause of the large<sup>a</sup> number of Catholics of that language who had settled beside the railroad, and had no one to work for them. The Vicar Apostolic had endeavored to find a Polish-speaking priest but he had hitherto failed.

Bishop Charlebois himself was threatened with blindness for a time during the year 1928. The oculists consulted reported the almost complete loss of the left eye, and weakness of the right one. Therefore he had to use the utmost caution and read or write as little as possible. This decision was very painful to the venerable bishop who nevertheless continued to read his letters and answer them the same as before.

A new disaster befell the Beauval School in 1929 when the building that housed the dynamo, as well as the tools, machines, and all the materials of every kind was destroyed by fire. The valuation of the whole was from four to five thousand dollars. But the value, considerable as it was, considering the poor resources of the Vicariate, was but a small loss compared with the delay in the rebuilding of the school. The machines and tools could not be replaced locally; the work was considerably delayed in consequence.

The December of that year brought to him who was so greatly attached to all the members of his family, the sad tidings of the death of his sister Albine, Madame E. Lajeunesse. "There is a great void in our midst. We are now reduced to four, like four dry stumps in the forest awaiting a puff of wind to overthrow them altogether. Which of us will be the first to fall? Only God knows that; we have to be ready."

Father Chamberland had been sent in the beginning of this year, 1929, to found a mission at God's Lake, to the north of Island Lake, in the midst of a completely Methodist territory. During the preceding years Father Dubeau had paid it several visits and in 1928 he had built a house for the missionary there.

February 25, 1930 brought another fiery disaster recalling that at the Beauval School, in the burning of the Indian School at Cross Lake. There also, the fire had been set by an evil hand which was none other than the hand of a pupil of the school. The fire, which started in the basement, was not discovered until two hours after midnight by which time the whole of the interior of the building was in flames. The Superior of the

nuns, a little boy, and eleven girls perished in the flames. Another of the nuns broke her spine in jumping from the second floor, a third broke her leg, and several others were more or less seriously injured, or suffered frozen feet from walking barefoot in the snow in a temperature that was twenty degrees below zero.

The surviving children were immediately taken back home by their parents who lived in the neighborhood. The others, with the Sisters, Fathers, and Brothers sought various refuges put at their disposal by the neighbors while waiting to return the children to their parents, or send them to Norway-House School, or to the School at Sturgeon Landing.

On receiving the telegram Bishop Charlebois went by aeroplane to the scene of the disaster. He contemplated the still smoking ruins of the magnificent school, but repressing his own agony he tried to console the victims of the catastrophe. Immediately on his arrival he had sent the aeroplane back with the most badly injured victim to the hospital at Le Pas. They all recovered finally. For himself, he went to the railroad by dog-train and went back to Le Pas by train. He had expected to obtain help from the Government for the prompt rebuilding of the burned school, but the Ottawa authorities refused to undertake the reconstruction, and ever since that time there has been only a day school at Cross Lake. It is taught by the Oblat Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

Father De Blois who had been assistant at the Cathedral for several years was appointed to the charge of the big mine at Flin-Flon. They built a church and presbytery there. This expansion still further reduced the staff at the Bishop's House.

During June His Excellency went on his usual visitation of the Western part of his Vicariate. Passing through Beauval he solemnly blessed the chapel of the new school, but the main body of the building was not even begun, and it was not finished until two years later.

The Vicar Apostolic took advantage of his visitation tour in the Ile à la Crosse district to visit the South-Western part of his vicariate which he had not yet visited. This section forms a point between the diocese of Prince Albert, and that of Edmonton, and served as a place of refuge for the remaining pagan Crees of that part of the country. Their camps around

the Big Island Lake, and Moor Hen Lake had been visited from time to time by missionaries from Ile à la Crosse and Green Lake, but until then they had always resisted every effort to convert them. According to more recent accounts they were better disposed at the moment and what is more, many colonists, mostly from the South of the Saskatchewan, driven more and more from there by the drought, had settled in the same place. For these reasons it appeared necessary to establish missions in this neighborhood. Bishop Charlebois had undertaken this trip in order to look into the possibilities of doing this. It was a painful and fatiguing journey for him.

A little later, in September another severe loss came to the Bishop and the whole Vicariate in the death of Father Adam, Superior of Beauval, and moderator of the Scholasticate there. This priest whose health was very poor, and who ought to have been in a sanatorium for a long while past, had come to the West in 1924. There he was cured of tuberculosis, but had remained in poor health which demanded much care. During the latter part of the time in particular he had undertaken to do work that would have been excessive for two men in vigorous health, and these excesses in work had undermined his constitution so that it offered no resistance to the trouble when in the autumn of that year, he was attacked by an illness diagnosed wrongly by the doctor, which was probably typhoid fever; he died tranquilly at the hospital at Ile à la Crosse to which he had been removed.

This death was a terrible blow for the Beauval Scholasticate where Father Pénard remained alone burdened with the teaching and direction of the scholastics, and during a part of the year with the direction of the school also. It was then in active course of reconstruction. It was to a certain extent a new miracle of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus that he was able to carry out the task.

These were the last of the great sorrows and trials of Bishop Charlebois.

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## CHAPTER VI

### Last Years — Death — Funeral (1931-1933)

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Bishop Charlebois' last years were consecrated to the founding of missions in the south-west of his vicariate, the missions so urgently needed, as he had ascertained during his visitation in 1930, which we have just read. The most urgently needed one was at Big Island Lake where there was a reservation of Cree-Indians who were nearly all pagans, while in the surrounding country within a radius of from twenty-five to thirty miles there were a great many settled colonists, or those about to settle there. He had even told some one to build a chapel, but the site was ill chosen, and badly made arrangements brought this undertaking to a costly fiasco.

He sent Father Gauthier there in June 1931. This was the same Father whom we saw looking after the scattered Catholics along the railroad, those near to Hudson Bay and to the mines. When he arrived at Big Island Lake the priest established himself immediately upon the Lake shore where he began to build a house to serve as school and chapel. He dedicated the mission to St. Leo. After building a little presbytery beside the school, in the following year, he was still preparing lumber for the construction of a church when Bishop Charlebois died.

During his visitation in 1930, the Bishop had encountered a number of Catholic colonists who had settled about twenty miles from Big Island Lake, but as they spoke the German language there was no one to take care of them. The vigilant pastor immediately got in touch with the Oblate Provincial of the German Province of Regina, asking him to send some of his religious to take care of these good people. After a number of conferences with Propaganda and the Oblate Superiors, Father Schultz, O.M.I., was given charge of these

colonists and he set to work with all his heart and with entire devotion. He began by building a house-chapel at Good Soil, then, despite his own poverty and that of his people, he undertook the building of a large and beautiful church. Thanks to the good will of his faithful, and the help of the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin who obtained for him a substantial assistance from the Catholic Church Extension Society of Toronto, this church was nearly finished at the time of the holy Bishop's death.

So as to complete this relation of the foundation of the missions in this section, we will relate the beginning of the Moor Hen Lake Mission, although it did not take place until 1932. Moor Hen Lake was the refuge of the most obstinate pagans among the Crees of this place. The missionaries from Ile à la Crosse, and Green Lake had already made overtures on several occasions to try and bring these Indians to the Christian religion. Hitherto their obstinacy and attachment to their heathen superstitions was so strong that every attempt to settle among them had proved a failure. There had been individual conversions, but the fanaticism of these pagans was such that the new converts had to leave the neighborhood, and in order to be able to practise their religion they had to settle either at Green Lake, or at Canot Lake.

In 1930 the dispositions of these people seemed to have improved; and they came of their own accord to ask that a priest might be sent to settle among them. Consequently Father Cabana was sent to them in the spring of 1932. He had a house-chapel built in the course of the summer, but, occupied with the cares of settling in, he could scarcely find time to attend to the evangelization of the pagans. He was not at this mission for more than a year, and his successor had only just settled down when Bishop Charlebois died.

A few months afterward the diocese of Prince Albert was divided, and the new diocese of Saskatoon was taken out of it. This necessitated a revision of the boundary lines which gave to the diocese of Prince Albert all of the south-west part of Keewatin, that is to say the three missions whose foundations we have just related, and the old mission of Green Lake, so that the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin no longer had to look

after this part of the old Vicariate, which had been the subject of the last anxieties of Bishop Charlebois.

The lamented Father Adam was replaced at length as head of the Beauval Scholasticate by Father Ph. Poirier. This Father who was entirely qualified for the task confided to him was unfortunately in poor health himself. He had been obliged to rest for some time at Maniwaki, in the Eastern Province, and he came to the West for the reestablishment of his health. Bishop Charlebois was very happy to exchange him for a young priest recently graduated from Beauval, and put him at the head of his scholasticate.

During the time that the scholasticate was thus being re-organized, the work on the school reconstruction was proceeding actively under the supervision of Brother Desrochers, a clever workman who had been loaned them for the time being by the Eastern Province. The Bishop, accompanied by Father Pietch, Assistant General of the Oblates, went to visit the scholasticate, and inspect the building operations which he found to be quite well advanced. The Sisters were able to go into the new building in the beginning of 1932. It is a fine fire-proof house made of solid bricks with cement floors, and capable of housing a hundred pupils.

Leaving Beauval, His Excellency taking leave of Father Pietch who was to return to Prince Albert alone, went on to Big Island Lake to see Father Gauthier who was still occupied in settling in. Then he went on to Edmonton from whence in the company of Archbishops Forbes of Ottawa and O'Leary of Edmonton, Bishops Breynat, O.M.I., Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie, and Guy, O.M.I., Vicar Apostolic of Grouard, he went to the extreme North, to Fort Resolution to take part in the consecration of Bishop Falaize, O.M.I., who had just been named coadjutor to Bishop Breynat. From Edmonton they travelled by the railroad as far as Waterways, at the junction of the Clearwater and Athabaska Rivers. From there they went by aeroplane as far as Fort Smith, where the travellers took Bishop Breynat's boat for Fort Resolution.

The consecration ceremonies were magnificent. Never before in that lowest depth of the icy North had such an imposing gathering of the princes of the Church been so much as imagined. The return journey was made by aeroplane from



Fort Resolution to Waterways, and thence by railroad. Bishop Charlebois was back again in Le Pas on September 22.

The end of 1931 and the beginning of 1932 were marked by cruel losses in the Oblate Congregation. First of all came the death of the Superior General, Mgr. Dontenwill; at the end of November, 1931. A few weeks later the Second Assistant General, Father Belle, and in January Father Dozois, First Assistant General followed him, while a few months later Father Estève, Attorney for the Oblate Congregation at the Holy See, also died full of years.

These accumulated sorrows profoundly saddened the heart of every Oblate, but Bishop Charlebois felt them worse than others because he was the contemporary of the venerated dead, besides he had had very frequent and intimate relations with both Father Dozois and Father Estève.

Dread lest he himself might die suddenly, and without having provided for the future of his Vicariate, was probably what induced him to act upon a long formed project of his, which was to ask for a coadjutor with the right of succession. The only reason for hesitation was that the desired coadjutor was none other than his nephew, Father Martin Lajeunesse, who had filled the place of vicar-delegate at Le Pas for six years, that is to say he had been vicar general and procurator for the missions. In making the request he feared incurring the guilt, or at least appearance of having incurred it, of nepotism. And what is more he knew the humility of the person interested, and his great distrust of himself. He dreaded a strong opposition from him. These considerations made him hesitate, and in a way caused him scruples.

It happened just then that he received a visit from Archbishop Villeneuve, formerly Bishop of Gravelbourg, and recently named Archbishop of Quebec, and of Bishop Breynat, Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie. The two illustrious visitors arrived in Le Pas without knowing that they would meet there. No doubt their encounter in the Bishop's House in Le Pas was another of those attentions of Providence, the like of which we have seen several times in the life of Bishop Charlebois.

The three prelates must have conversed together about the Canadian Church in general, and in particular about the Church in the West. Among other topics was the question of



Communism which had been occupying the thoughts of Bishop Charlebois for some time, as we will see later on. But it was most of all the question of the coadjutor which formed the subject of their deliberations. And, as there was but one accord to point him out, either within or without the Vicariate, the two visitors demolished the scruples and put a stop to Bishop Charlebois' hesitations. It was decided that he would ask for him who had been his right hand in the government and administration of the Vicariate for six years. We believe that the petition was drawn up at Le Pas itself, if not, it was certainly done during the journey that the Vicar Apostolic made to the East a few weeks later.

Upon the recommendation of the Archbishop of Quebec, the petition was favorably received in Rome, and at the end of the summer Father Martin Lajeunesse was nominated by Propaganda to be coadjutor of Keewatin. This nomination should have been made public and the consecration of the bishop-elect could have taken place in the autumn of 1932 if Bishop Charlebois had not himself suggested a delay. That was because in the meantime Father Lajeunesse had been almost unanimously elected as delegate for the Keewatin missionaries at the General Chapter of the Oblates in Rome at the end of September. Bishop Charlebois dreaded some embarrassment for his coadjutor-elect at the Chapter if his nomination were to be known. That is why he asked Propaganda to wait for the end of the Chapter before making the nomination public. But the Chapter had been finished a long while, and the nomination did not arrive. The old Bishop made some inquiries and learned that Father Lajeunesse taking advantage of his trip to Rome had put forward every kind of objections to Propaganda against his nomination. He did not find it difficult to refute these objections, besides, they were not the kind to discredit the newly elected bishop with the Roman Authorities.

At length, on April 25, 1933, Bishop Martin Lajeunesse was preconised Bishop of Bonusta, and coadjutor of Keewatin with the right of succession. This time Propaganda did not ask his opinion. Bishop Charlebois was in the East. His vicar general confident, on account of the objections he had made, waited calmly for the nomination of some one else as his uncle's coadjutor. Without the least warning, he learned from the

newspapers that he had been nominated for the dignity that he feared so much. It was a disagreeable surprise for him, by which he repaid a little for the anxiety he had caused his venerable uncle.

The Vicar Apostolic consecrated his coadjutor in the Assumption parish church on June 29, 1933. It was the same church in which he himself had been consecrated, and in which he had conferred the priesthood upon the one he was that day to consecrate as a pontiff of the Church of God. The two other consecrating bishops were Bishop Deschamps, auxilliary of the Archbishop-coadjutor of Montreal, and Bishop Papi-neau of Joliette.

There was a beautiful crown of bishops around the newly-consecrated bishop and his consecrator, over whom His Eminence Cardinal Villeneuve, O.M.I., Archbishop of Quebec, presided. Archbishop Villeneuve had only recently been elevated to the Cardinalial dignity. An imposing number of priests, religious, and sisters, members of the families of Charlebois and Lajeunesse and the many benefactors of the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin and his missions, a large number of students and alumni of the College of Assumption where both the consecrator and the new bishop had made their classical studies, made up so to speak an innumerable company in the forefront of which was the venerable mother of the new pontiff, Madame Lajeunesse sister of Bishop Charlebois, who was more than an octogenarian. In greeting her after the ceremony, Bishop Lajeunesse attributed the signal grace that he had that day received, and the numerous sacerdotal and religious vocations that God had caused to develop among her children, to the Christian education and formation that she had given them. There were a bishop, two priests, three sisters, and another who had died on the eve of entering the convent.

Cardinal Villeneuve remarked that the two families of Charlebois and Lajeunesse had given to the Church at the time of his consecration, within a half century, two bishops, sixteen priests, three religious scholastics, future priests, and twenty religious sisters. Surely very few families in the whole world could present a record to compare with these two blessed families.

Bishop Charlebois in his speech at the banquet following the ceremony, thanked God for the grace done him that day in giving him such a coadjutor. He said, in a voice that impressed every one there: "This day all my anxieties for the future of my Vicariate are over. I can now say: '*Nunc dimittis, Domine, servum tuum in pace.*'" When those present protested, he added: "I do well to say it; it is written." It was indeed written upon the paper he held in his hand, but was that all that he meant? His insistence upon this "*Nunc dimittis*" in his replies to the letters of congratulation that were addressed to him, his way of discussing the future with his coadjutor in various circumstances, all lead one to suppose that he knew, or at least had a strong presentiment of his approaching death, although the state of his health at that time gave no color to anything of that kind. There were great celebrations at Le Pas also for the reception of Bishop Lajeunesse when he arrived on July 15. It is not necessary to recount the details of these celebrations, nor the discourses given during them, but we cannot pass over the words of Mr. Elliott, Commissioner of the Manitoba Government for the Northern District, because those words did justice to Bishop Charlebois against an adverse judgment on the part of several people. We remark that Mr. Elliott is a Protestant.

"I do not know," he said, "how they choose Bishops in the Catholic Church, but if the choice is always as happy as the present one, we must admit that the Church possesses discerning heads. The names Charlebois and Lajeunesse portend success for religious undertakings, because the faithful always follow good leaders. The long service of Bishop Charlebois has gained for him the affection and love of the Catholics, and the respect of all those who know him. Since I have been the chargé d'affaires for the northern part of this province, I have had to deal with Bishop Charlebois several times concerning matters relating to the Church and the Province. I have always found him a man of broad views who always accorded to me the right to think, to speak, and to act according to my conscience. Nothing has ever happened to confuse our relations." (*L'Héritier*, pp. 53-55.)

That year it was the turn of the Western Mission to receive the episcopal visitation. Bishop Lajeunesse undertook

to make it, so Bishop Charlebois remained at Le Pas, which is not to say that he rested. In addition to the correspondence which absorbed him through the months of July and August, he took several trips. After a quick tour on the Bay Line, he went to Grand Rapids. At the end of ten days he returned worn out, and contrary to his usual habit he owned to feeling very tired, but for all that he went to visit his dear Cumberland Mission after a few days. It was, alas! a farewell visit. Every trip tired him out now. But for all that he wished to go and preach a retreat for the opening of the school for the little Indians at Sturgeon Landing, but when he got back to Le Pas he had to go to the hospital.

During the last months of his life the question of Communism obsessed him. It was making frightful progress in Canada, and the old missionary saw with alarm that the formidable sect was spreading over the country at the same time as religion. His patriotism made him take alarm at least as much as his religious sentiments, for he knew that religion would triumph in the end, but Canada has no promise of life like those that have been made to the Church. How often have we not heard him sigh over the blindness of governments which permit this sect which is destructive of all law and order, the liberty to spread its pestilential doctrines.

He wanted an understanding among the whole episcopate upon this matter which is as much a religious as a political and social question. A letter from Bishop Gauthier, Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Montreal, one in which Communism was refuted and condemned by a master hand, was a great comfort to him. He hastened to congratulate the author, and encourage him to continue the fight. "For," he wrote, "this letter is the first bomb thrown into the enemy's camp."

But it was only a first bomb; Bishop Charlebois would have had it followed by a collective letter from the whole Canadian episcopacy solemnly condemning the deadly heresy. According to him, such a letter would open the eyes of the civil authorities to the danger being run as much in the social as in the religious order. It would also, he thought, awaken the zeal of the Catholic press which has been a little lulled into security on this head when certain organs otherwise patriotic and truly



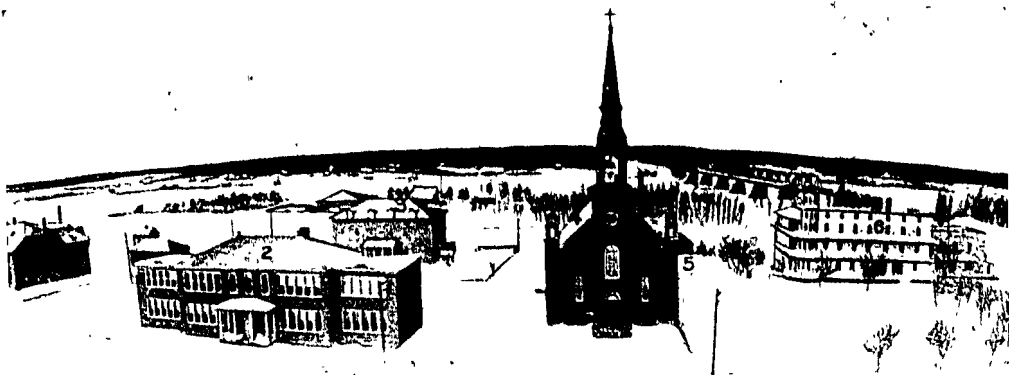
His Excellency Mgr  
Martin Lajeunesse,  
bishop of Bonusta,  
nephew and successor  
to Bishop Charlebois



The "heir" and  
the uncle

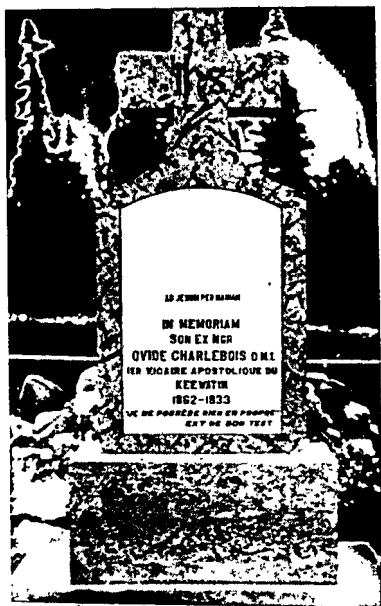


Bishop Lajeunesse  
walking to his first  
pontifical Mass at  
Le Pas



- 1 Bishop's House
- 2 School
- 3 Nuns' residence
- 4 Cathedral
- 5 First cathedral
- 6 First hospital (actually destroyed)

Bishop Charlebois' accomplishments  
Le Pas, Manitoba



Bishop Charlebois' grave



Bishop Lajeunesse praying at the grave of his beloved wife.

Christian manifested sympathy, if not for Communism, at least for the C.C.F., its Siamese twin.

During the last months of his life he conceived the plan of a central bureau which would aid the Catholic Press to take concerted action against Communism. All information concerning the menace, and propaganda methods of Communism, would be there collected, and passed out to the papers. It seems as though these thoughts must have been uppermost in his mind during the last journey into Quebec Province that he made during September 1933, when he went to assist at the consecration of Bishop Yelle, recently named coadjutor to the Archbishop of St. Boniface. When that was over, he went on to the gathering of the Canadian Bishops that was held in Quebec during October. Unfortunately death prevented him from developing this plan, but it pleased him to sign the letter of the Canadian Bishops on this question, and there is no doubt that the new letter of Bishop Gauthier in the beginning of 1934 would have brought him great consolation, could he have known about it.

The danger of Communism worried him until his last moment. He even spoke about it in his delirium. One of his nieces, a religious, wrote to him that she had offered her life as a victim in his place. During the few days of respite that his sickness gave him before the end, he replied: "You desire to offer yourself as a victim in my place. It is not necessary... Your life of voluntary immolation is more precious than mine. If you wish to offer yourself as a victim, offer yourself to God so that the Church in Canada may not be persecuted. You know that the Communists are carrying on a serious campaign to seize the power in our country. If they succeed it will mean religious persecution such as they have in Russia, Spain, and Mexico. Now, to avert this misfortune it will be necessary to have victims to appease the anger of God who is incensed by the crimes of the peoples. That is a fine opportunity for one who desires to offer herself as a victim."

We return to the weeks that preceded his death. As we have already seen, the retreat for the Indian children at the Sturgeon Landing School had greatly fatigued the venerable Bishop. He had returned on September 11 with an attack of bronchitis that obliged him to go to the hospital, but when the



date set for his departure to the East came, September 15, he went, even though he was far from recovered. The trouble persisted throughout the journey; it even grew worse, and a telegram which he received on his arrival in Montreal contributed nothing toward his recovery. His Coadjutor announced the death of Father Dumais who had been accidentally drowned in Reindeer Lake on September 7. This young priest had come from the Beauval Scholasticate barely two years before, and thanks to his intellectual gifts and physical vigor he had seemed destined to a long and fruitful apostolate. The news of his tragic death was a very painful blow for the heart of the old Bishop who was so much attached to his missionaries.

In spite of the suffering this caused him he accepted this new trial in a spirit of faith and resignation to the will of God, as he accepted every trial that it pleased Providence to send him. Writing to the mother of the young departed priest, whose Christian spirit he well knew, he began his letter as follows: "On your knees, Madam. A Christian mother should not read this letter which I write to you except upon her knees." No doubt he himself had fallen upon his knees at the announcement of this unexpected death. But the blow was not less hard all the same.

His bronchitis persisted and his weakness increased. After the Bishops' Meeting at Quebec, he stayed again at the Hotel Dieu in Montreal, but before he was well again, an unfortunate business matter called him to Ottawa, and instead of returning to Montreal after it was concluded, he took the train for the West. His fever and the distressing cough made the journey very exhausting. He arrived at Barrows during the night of October 27-28 where he learned that a sick woman was asking for a priest. Perspiring, and feverish, he nevertheless did not hesitate to go those five miles that lay between the little village and the station; it was a cold October night, and he had to use a dog train. All this was certainly not calculated to reduce the fever, besides he had to stay there three days. He had arrived on the Saturday morning but could not go on until the following Monday night, for there would be no train until then.

During the day of Saturday he administered the sick woman, heard the confessions of everyone there; he sang Mass

on the Sunday, but they noticed that he remained seated while preaching, a thing he never did. However he did not think the weakness from which he was suffering a sufficient reason for losing time, so he took advantage of the moments left after exercising his sacred ministry to write up the "*Liber animarum*" of the Catholics in that place, which must have been a very fatiguing piece of work.

He returned to Le Pas on the morning of Tuesday, October 31, celebrated Mass on his arrival, and went to his desk immediately after breakfast to examine his correspondence. But he was not so communicative as usual on his return from a journey and went several times to lie down upon his bed, a thing entirely contrary to his habits. The night was a very bad one and on the following day, November 1, he consented to go to the hospital, constrained by the fear of disturbing the other inhabitants of the Bishop's House by his persistent cough. They noticed that before leaving for the hospital he made several tours around his room, as though he had a presentiment that he would never see it again.

His first three days at the hospital did not appear very disquieting, there was no rise in temperature, and the cough seemed to be decreasing. A sudden rise in his temperature came on the afternoon of November 4. It reached 105 at five o'clock; the patient became delirious and no longer knew anybody. This crisis made the doctor very anxious, but it did not last long. When Bishop Lajeunesse who had been beside him through the crisis, returned at half past six, he was smiling, but as he noticed his nephew's anxiety, he asked what had happened to him for he remembered nothing about it. Bishop Lajeunesse tried to tell him gently that his case was grave. The old Bishop would not permit these precautions. "How many degrees did I have?" he asked sharply. His nephew tried to evade the question, but the sick man would not permit it. "That is not it," he said, "I want to know the truth." Then without hiding anything, Bishop Lajeunesse told him that he had had a fever of 105 degrees, that he had been delirious, and that while the crisis lasted he had visited him. The sick man had no remembrance of the visit.

A little surprised, but not afraid, the valiant prelate said: "This might be dangerous, I am going to prepare myself."

Looking at his watch, he said: "It is seven o'clock, leave me for an hour, then come back."

However, before dismissing his coadjutor he wished to give him a few instructions. "I am at peace as far as the administration is concerned. But are you very sure that my will is in the strong box?"

"Yes." "Oh, I have nothing. Everything belongs to the Episcopal Corporation. It is easy to arrange for the funeral. I was born poor; I have begged all through my missionary life; I would not die a millionaire. I should like a poor kind of coffin. How much do those cost which the Government provides for the Indians?" "From forty to fifty dollars?" "Then that is what I want. And then, I do not want to be buried in the Cathedral. They would have to build a cement vault and that would cost too much. You will lay me in the cemetery."

The testament in question runs like this: "I declare that every act and contract I have signed with my name is meant to be signed in the name of 'The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Keewatin.' All profit or all property which has resulted from it belongs to the same Corporation. In the same way, every obligation which results from it binds the same Corporation."

"I further declare that I possess nothing of my own, and that I leave absolutely nothing to my natural heirs."

Thus this Bishop who without any resources, but counting only upon Providence and the generosity of his benefactors, had created an enormous Vicariate Apostolic, dowered it with beautiful buildings which ornament the town of Le Pas, had established so many new missions and restored, many of them several times, those that had previously existed in his Vicariate, this Bishop died in the most absolute personal poverty. He not only died poor, but even after his death he wished to be treated as a poor man.

After all that is the way he had always treated himself. He had consistently set aside, not merely comfort, but simple conveniences. In the new Bishop's House, which he thought of as too fine for him, his personal apartments were furnished as simply as possible. We are now installed in his room for the writing of these pages. We found it exactly as it was when he was living, and we used to visit the venerable prelate. His

desk, three chairs, and a bed. We had to bring in a table and a filing cabinet. Those things might have been very useful to Bishop Charlebois, but he was able to do without, and he did. One would suppose that he regretted the inconveniences and makeshift arrangements of his missionary life and the early years of his episcopate.

Bishop Lajeunesse returned to the sick man at the time arranged to administer the last Sacraments. He made his confession, then asking for his rule book he renewed his religious profession, and received the Viaticum and Extreme Unction with devotion, responding to all the prayers himself.

It was nine o'clock when the venerable Bishop was administered and the rest of the night passed well. The following day was good. He even said that Extreme Unction in curing his soul had also cured his body. In fact the improvement seemed to continue during the following days. The cough diminished and the lungs functioned better, but the left kidney still remained in a bad condition which made the doctors anxious. On November 10 the patient was able to get up for a little while; he even celebrated his Mass. He immediately wanted to return to his correspondence, and from the 12th to the 18th of November he wrote a considerable number of letters. In every one he said that he was cured, as he applied himself to relieving the anxiety of his relations, benefactors and missionaries. He even wanted to return home, and it was only the representations of his coadjutor that induced him to remain in the hospital. One day he said to the Sister who was taking care of him: "Really, I do not know why I am staying here, for I am no longer ill. I absolutely must leave the hospital on the 20th." And he did leave it on the 20th, but it was not to return to the Bishop's House.

It happened that a lay Brother from a distant mission had come to the hospital for a rather dangerous operation. The Father who was attending him was taken ill. As soon as he heard of it the Bishop went himself to the operating room, and in spite of his own weakness he remained standing beside the patient, consoling and encouraging him until it was all over. This episode shows clearly the interest he had for even the least member of his religious family.

Things continued in the same way until November 18. On the morning of that day he again wrote several letters, but he did not feel so well as on the preceding days. During the afternoon his temperature rose again, and although the doctor gave him an injection he became rapidly worse, with nausea, unbearable pain in the kidney, violent shivering fits and a sensation of cold. On the following day which was November 19, he said: "I have suffered much from the cold during my missionary life, but never so much as last night." His temperature had risen to a 108 degrees for a moment. On this same day the fever dropped, but during the whole day his weakness increased. It was a weakness that did not prevent him from conversing with his coadjutor concerning the business of the Vicariate.

The evening brought a return of the shivering fits, and the patient became very excited, trying to speak and not succeeding on account of his tremulous condition. The only word they could understand him to pronounce was: "Jesus". It was his last word. After that he appeared to become drowsy, but this sleep was a coma from which he never emerged. He died tranquilly the following morning toward eight o'clock while they were reciting the prayers for the agonizing. It was November 20.

His last word upon earth was "Jesus". His last official teaching addressed to all the faithful of his Vicariate was an indignant protestation against the insults hurled by the Communists against the Blessed Virgin. His last circular letter closes with these words: "It is sad to relate, but the wickedness of the Communists has not even respected the Blessed Virgin. They have pushed their malice so far as to treat her like an infamous woman, and the crowd has applauded them. It is revolting! Think for a moment; it is our Heavenly Mother who is thus outraged! The hearts of her children should be more than indignant. Please try to exhort the faithful to exhibit more respect, more love, more confidence toward our good Mother in Heaven. Let us encourage the recitation of the rosary in which she is worthily saluted. These salutations will console her and drive away from us those chastisements that her Divine Son ordinarily deals out to those who insult His Mother." (Cir. No. 33.)

He had begun his episcopate by saying: "To Jesus through Mary." His last official teaching, and his last uttered word seemed to say: "*Per Mariam ad Jesum.*" Thus ends the record of his twenty-three laborious years of episcopate which he had used exclusively to lead souls to Jesus, by putting them under the protection of Mary.

During the five days that his body lay in state before the funeral, the whole population of Le Pas, both Catholic and Protestant, filed past his coffin, manifesting the unanimous regret caused by the departure of one whom they had rightly come to consider as the first citizen of their town. Even the Protestant clergymen came to pay their respects to him, and one of them could not restrain his tears. Such was the general esteem for the character of the venerated deceased. Every flag was flown at half mast during the whole time that the body lay in state.

The death of this poor missionary in the icy regions of the North, who had tried to be forgotten and to pass unknown all his life had stirred not the town of Le Pas alone, and the whole Vicariate of Keewatin, but appeared to have aroused the whole of Canada. Letters of condolence expressing esteem for the venerable prelate poured in from all directions. The chief of the Federal Government, the Hon. M. Bennett; the chief of the opposition, the Hon. M. King; the Prime Minister of Manitoba, the Cardinal Archbishop of Quebec, all of the Canadian Bishops,\* a number of Senators and Deputies, of Magistrates and distinguished people from all parts of the country hastened to offer their condolences to Bishop Lajeunesse. Nearly all the Western newspapers, and some of those in the East, in announcing the death of the holy Bishop added notices recounting life and works of the Great Missionary frequently in magnificently worded tributes. The most remarkable of these was certainly that in the "*Patriote de l'Ouest*" of November 29, 1933.

As for the funeral which the humble prelate wished to be so simple, it was so in sobriety of decorations, but it was imposing on account of the number and distinction of the assistants. In spite of the distance and the difficulty of communications, we remarked three archbishops, four bishops, a mitred abbot, the representatives of many archbishops and bishops, a

representative of the Premier of Canada, a representative of the Premier of Manitoba, a crowd of priests and religious, as well as the Mayor of Le Pas, who was supported by the greater number of the town's people.

At the Requiem Mass celebrated by Bishop Lajeunesse there were two funeral orations, one in English by Archbishop McGuigan of Regina; the other in French by Bishop Prud'homme of Prince Albert.

The first, taking for his text the passage from the Acts of the Apostles where St. Paul bids farewell to the faithful of Ephesus, who weep because they will never see his face again, drew a touching likeness between the mourning of the Ephesians, and that of those who were that day assisting at the funeral of the great missionary bishop, particularly those of Le Pas, and of the whole Vicariate of Keewatin. Then he traced the career of the apostle, insisting upon his spirit of faith, his love of souls, his tenderness toward the little ones, and his attachment to his religious family, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He alluded to his poverty, and to the many and sorrowful trials to which it had pleased God to subject His servant who, in spite of every obstacle, had erected a magnificent spiritual monument, and even a temporal one in that vicariate, where before his coming there had been nothing.

Bishop Prud'homme took his text from St. Paul's words: "I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith." In an eloquent flight of oratory he outlined the life of the valiant athlete who had devoted himself to the salvation of the most abandoned souls amidst fatigues, hunger, thirst, a very martyrdom of cold, and the opposition and carelessness of many of his neophytes. "How shall we recount all the sacrifices attaching to the memory of the beloved and venerated departed whom we mourn today?"

Following the Mass, the traditional five absolutions were given successively by Bishop Breynat, Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie; Bishop Melanson of Gravelbourg; Bishop Yelle, coadjutor of the Archbishop of St. Boniface; Archbishop Sinnott of Winnipeg, and Bishop Lajeunesse, the new Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin.

After the absolutions, while the procession was forming to conduct the body of the missionary bishop to the last resting

place, which he had chosen for himself among his faithful Catholics of Le Pas, a strange thing happened that was remarked by everybody who witnessed it, by Protestants as well as by Catholics. The hearse had stopped before the parish hall, the "Salle Guy", when a flight of white partridges numbering about twenty-five or thirty, flew over the hearse. The white birds settled on the other side of the road and remained there until the procession moved on. Then, taking to flight again, they flew a second time over the hearse before disappearing in the direction of the cemetery.

This incident was the more striking because the white partridge is a species which passes the summer in the Arctic regions, and is never seen in the latitude of Le Pas before mid-December. Besides they never settle thus in the midst of a crowd. Those who witnessed it said that it was positively the first time that any of these birds had been seen alighting in the middle of the town.

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## EPILOGUE

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The body of Bishop Charlebois now reposes in the humble Catholic Cemetery of Le Pas, beneath a simple monument they have raised to his memory in the midst of the poor and lowly folks among who he lived his life. But "*Defunctus adhuc loquitur.*" Being dead he yet speaketh, for he lives and speaks still in the religious buildings with which he ornamented the town of Le Pas. Monseigneur Cassulo, the Apostolic Delegate, said during the visit that he made to Le Pas in July 1935, "This church, this school, and this hospital are so many monuments raised to the honor of our holy and venerated Bishop." And it is the same with him in every mission or school that was founded or restored by him throughout the Vicariate.

He lives not only in these material monuments the fruit of his privations and sweat; but he lives more truly in the fruits of his teachings to the Christians of the Vicariate, and in the love with which he inspired them, in the paternal counsels he lavished upon them. He yet lives in the apostolic spirit he breathed into his missionaries, in the personal direction that was always so wise and just that he gave to everyone of them. More perhaps, still, he lives in the admirable collection of circulars so full of the apostolic spirit, which give such precious directions for the administration and direction of the mission as much from the spiritual as from the material point of view.

He still lives, may he live long, in the memories of all those young men, alumni or new students, whom he so often visited in their colleges and seminaries, who became ever more and more penetrated with the apostolic spirit that everywhere and always he strove to diffuse around him. If they felt that God called them, let them also come to work in the Lord's vineyard, in that portion which is the poorest and most abandoned field of the Master of the Household. And supposing

that they did not feel this call, nevertheless let them work for the mission cause, according to their condition and their means, by their alms, above all by their prayers.

He still lives and will live a long time in the hearts of the benefactors who were so devoted to him. For, once the ice of his timidity had been broken, the character of Bishop Charlebois was so attractive that every benefactor became his personal friend, and as much attached to him as though he had been a member of his family. In the innumerable letters of condolence received by his nephew and successor, all the friends who by their alms had enabled the courageous missionary to undertake the great things that he accomplished in Keewatin, pour out their sorrow in such terms as to lead one to suppose that they themselves had lost a notable benefactor.

It is not only a verbal, or written sorrow; one feels in all the letters the accents of a pain that is truly heart-felt. The few who were more intimate with the venerated departed experienced, so lively a pain that it made them ill. Such was the good Monsieur M. Wilbrod Labrèche of Montreal, who for twelve consecutive years had placed his automobile at the service of Bishop Charlebois on each of his visits to the East, and had driven him in numberless trips and visits necessitated by the needs of his missions. The announcement of the Bishop's death to this good friend caused him such sorrow that his life was in danger. Such again was the charitable Caroline Côté, another notable benefactor of Bishop Charlebois who while assisting at a requiem for him was so moved as to suffer a disquieting attack. And how many more there were, who without manifesting so sensible a sorrow were no less stricken to the heart by the unexpected announcement of the death of the great missionary.

In fact, as one newspaper remarked, the whole of Canada was profoundly stirred by the death of this humble man who had always tried to remain unknown, but whose sympathetic figure had engraved itself upon the hearts, not only of his intimates, but of all those privileged to hear or to see him. Witness the demonstrations of sorrow and mourning in the parishes where the dead pastor had made but short appearances, where the population assisted *en masse* at the requiems that were ce

lebrated for him, just as it might have been in the case of a relation or a benefactor.

We hope that everyone will keep a faithful memory both of the missionary himself, and of the lessons in the Christian spirit, and in patriotism that he never ceased giving during the whole course of his life, by his words, and his example. For, if he was most of all wholly a Christian and a missionary, he was at the same time patriotic, just because he was a Christian and a missionary. This is one aspect of his life that the small compass of this volume has prevented us from entering upon, for the same reason we have been compelled to omit many interesting details of his missionary adventures.

We hope that later on some historian who is better fitted for this work will give a complete history of this beautiful life. While awaiting this larger work, we believe it would be well to publish, at least in part, his edifying and interesting letters, and especially those relating to the first years of his missionary career which he entitled "The Echo of Cumberland." We have used that material freely for the writing of the second part of this book and it has often been difficult not to make much longer quotations from this mine of interesting material.

We hope for the survival of the great departed one, and this the more surely because in the many letters of condolence received, we find expressed amid the tears and regrets the certainty that the venerated prelate already enjoys the reward of his works, and that in praying for him nearly everybody was inclined to pray to him, and invoke his aid for themselves. Several even attributed wonderful cures, or signal graces to the intercession of the servant of God. The flight of white partridges which twice flew over the hearse at Le Pas during the funeral has struck many people, even some Protestants, with wonder.

One of his notable benefactresses was at death's door when the news of Bishop Charlebois' death arrived. As she was very much attached to him they feared to tell her the news because emotion might be dangerous for her. On the following day as they were trying to tell her, taking all kinds of precautions, she smiled and said: "I know what you wish to say Bishop Charlebois is dead. He came to tell me so himself."

Naturally we cannot pass judgment upon these marvelous incidents: we have to await the judgment of the Church. But we are permitted to invoke the beloved dead privately, and to ask God for the glorification of His faithful servant, if He wills it. In order to obtain this grace, supposing God wills it, let us continue to aid the work of the missions, the great work to which Bishop Charlebois devoted himself, and in which he has certainly not lost interest.

The Author begs, in closing, to ask a little remembrance in the prayers of his readers. His 73 years remind him that for him also the time is approaching when he must also hand in his accounts. At that critical moment he will have great need that they come to his help, and in the meanwhile will they be good enough to pray for him that he may be well prepared.

## ALWAYS HIMSELF

*Bishop Charlebois will die... he is dead! /  
'Twas yesterday he trod the snowy ways...  
Today... he sleeps...*

*The Angel who on high from hour to hour  
Within the glory of that blest abode  
Speaks gently of our sorrow with the elect,  
And sounds the death-knells of this dismal plain,  
Setting his flaming trumpet to his lips...  
"The Bishop of Le Pas is dead,"... proclaimed.*

*.....Ere yet the word had circled the blest throng  
They heard ascending from earth's exile sad,  
Clamours, and beating wings that clove the air.  
"Open, oh, open! ye eternal gates!"  
Then, borne upon the hearts of Cherubim  
.....Monseigneur Charlebois entered Paradise.  
Thus entered he, with shining merits decked,  
Ovide, the shepherd of St. Margaret's,  
Ovide devoted, burning-hearted priest,  
He who in Cumberland for sixteen years  
Had scarcely, in the sunshine or the storm  
A stone, at Pas, whereon to lay his head;  
Ovide the pontiff of the boundless wild,  
Men saw his passing o'er Manitobean steppes  
Bow'd down to earth, by them an outcast deemed,  
Who passed his rosary in mittened hands,  
Furrowed the snow from Peter's Church to Pas,  
The footsteps counted by the eye of God  
Of him who walked, 'neath clouds, his pastoral way,  
Nor ever left his own cathedral aisles,  
For the blue sky his own cathedral was.  
There entered he that glory where all shines,  
Ovide, who burned his last poor candle end  
While visiting the cabin of the poor.*

\*   \*   \*

*More vagabond than errant Bishop, he,  
 His little eyes wide opened in surprise,  
 He heard the Eternal College him proclaim.  
 They stood about him in their snowy robes,  
 Oblates of Mary, Apostles of the North,  
 His brothers who preceded him in death,  
 All glorious stood there, sowers of the word;  
 Christ's own surveyors from the sterile earth;  
 Haulers of dog-trains, there the Oblates stood  
 In conquering might.*

\*   \*   \*

*The first among them stood  
 Taché, whose genius fashioned the brave church  
 That spills its presence o'er the boundless plain;  
 Grandin, whose very heartstrings would have burned  
 With cold, had not love's fire conquered frost;  
 Faroud, whose suffering body kept his soul,  
 And walked in peace serene; the suffering Bishop Clut;  
 Little old Jussard, shadow of Jesus Christ,  
 So self-effaced, this Bishop of the Crees;  
 Grouard, the patriarch with flowing beard;  
 Lacombe, giant of the prairie, gallant heart;  
 Pascal, who midst his sadness one fair morn  
 The Tabernacle clasped against his heart;  
 Gascon, 'Lean pray-er' legendary marcher,  
 Grollier, who in the Arctic raised the Cross;  
 Husson the builder; Tissier the shuddering;  
 Rouvière whose blood crimsoned the snow,  
 And William Le Roux, brother in Martyrdom;  
 Fafard the brave; and bullet-torn Marchand;  
 Lecomte; Le Doussal; Seguin; and again  
 The holy Père Legoff; Auguste Lecorr,  
 Snow-blinded in both eyes;  
 Boisseau of Fort George; the bright parade  
 Of desert runners in the barren lands,  
 Whom they called proudly "Apostles all Unknown";  
 All! all! were there;*

\*   \*   \*

*The Bishop of the Portages,  
 In robes of glory, white, shared in a throne.  
 For out-worn moccasins wore golden shoes,  
 Around his head a saintly aureole.  
 When he was seated in the splendid light,*

In his eternity, Bishop Ovide  
Sought with his eyes among the saintly throng  
And finding not, his gesture swift appealed  
The Queen of the elect whom he in life  
Had ever made his path to Jesus:  
"Among all those I see, dear Mother, tell,  
Where are my forest children?"  
"With you they hymn their victory, dear son,  
But you, as pontiff must for ever be  
Higher in glory."  
"I understand, good Mother, yet I thought  
To spend eternity amid my Montagnais."

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They went to Jesus with the Bishop's plaints,  
The Lord held council with the Sanctuary Saints.  
The Bishop's plea seemed strange in that high Court.  
St. Peter spoke: "It is a mystery—  
I must protest—a case of Character—"  
The Apostle ceased and every eye looked down.  
It was Thérèse's turn, she of Lisieux,  
She said it would be natural to think  
That those together suffered here below  
Might dream of life together in the skies;  
And Love might not, in any case contend;  
Not e'en in Heaven. And none spoke more.  
The "Little Queen" was, all knew it well,  
A little bit in power; for 'tis she  
Whom Jesus Christ hears every time she prays  
In favor of a missionary. More,  
This good Oblate's voice had been  
Raised in petition to the 'Christ on Earth',  
For her appointment to the Mission Fields,  
As Advocate.

\*   \*  
\*   \*

Knowing that, too, none spoke.  
"Granted," said Jesus; and the Bishop: "Thanks!"

\*   \*  
\*   \*

Should you, when you go searching for your crown,  
Notice a pontiff absent from his throne,  
You'll know you'll find the Bishop of Le Pas  
Among his Montagnais—he will be there—do not forget!

E. NADEAU, O.M.I



Le Lac, 18 Nov. 1933

Bien cher Frère,

Take a longue lettre me  
riterait une longue réponse; mais  
je ne puis me permettre ce plaisir  
Vous savez que j'ai été bien malade les 10  
derniers; mais je suis loin d'être guéri.  
Je souffre encore beaucoup de mes reins.  
J'ai fini maintenant en lisant  
les beaux sentiments qui vous animent.

C'est le vrai idéal que devrait ressentir  
tout aspirant à la prêtrise. Pour tout  
conseil je vous dis: continuez à être  
de votre idéal et tout sera bien.

Continuez à prier pour moi. Dieu des  
seul et de Dieu qui a fait pitié de mon cas.  
Je ne tiens pas à vivre; mais je tiens à  
aller voir Dieu. — Bon courage, ch.

Frère — Je vous salue de tout cœur  
Bonne nuit + D. G. Charlebois, m.s.

## APPENDIX

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### IMPOSING FUNERAL OF HIS EXCELLENCY BISHOP OVIDE CHARLEBOIS, O.M.I.

Eight archbishops and bishops.—His nephew, Bishop Lajeunesse, o.m.i., officiates.—Bishops McGuigan and Prud'homme pronounce the funeral oration.—The five traditional absolutions.

### GREAT MOURNING IN CHURCH AND STATE (Special to "Le Patriote")

On this day of November 25, 1933, the whole town of Le Pas is in mourning. For the past five days everybody, Catholic and Protestant alike have filed silent and serious before the coffin of the great Bishop for whom they weep as he lies in state in the black draped Cathedral. There Bishop Ovide Charlebois, who died on November 20, is giving his last audience to the little ones and the humble folk he loved so well. Outside the flags are flying at half mast, and souls feel the weight of a profound sadness, for it is a father, a guide, and a benefactor whom they see departing in the person of the venerable deceased.

#### General mourning

The tidings of his death sounded a very sorrowful knell in the hearts of all Canada. Messages of sympathy have flowed in from everywhere, and they came from all ranks of society; from every degree of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; from the civil government; His Eminence the Cardinal-Archbishop of Québec; His Excellency the Apostolic Delegate; their Excellencies the Archbishops of

Montreal and Ottawa; from the Honorable Premier of Manitoba, etc., etc. Others came to Le Pas in person to join with the prayers of the Church and render the last duties of respect and affection to the mortal remains of the first Bishop of Keewatin. The Canadian National Train brought their Excellencies Archbishop Sinnott of Winnipeg; Yelle, Archbishop-coadjutor of St. Boniface; their Excellencies Bishop Prud'homme of Prince Albert, and Saskatoon; Bishop Melanson of Gravelbourg; Bishop Breynat, Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie; Mitred-Abbot Gertken, O.S.B., of Muenster, as well as many priests the list of whom would be too long.

Father Charles Charlebois, O.M.I., of Ottawa, brother of the deceased Bishop, his nephews Father Lajeunesse, O.M.I., and Father Emmanuel Charlebois of Montreal, and his niece, Sister St Ovide, religious of the Presentation of Mary, had already arrived in advance to represent the family and share in the mourning of his Excellency Bishop Martin Lajeunesse, O.M.I., who, through the death of his uncle has succeeded to his place as head of the Vicariate of Keewatin.

Among those who would have most wished to look for the last time upon the beloved face of Bishop Charlebois, and to accompany his remains to their last resting place, his devoted fellow workers, priests, brothers, and religious hold the first rank, but they are faithfully keeping their watch for God in the distant missions. Their remoteness must have added cruelty to the blow, and more sorrow to the separation. Divine Providence had however reserved this privilege to a round dozen of them who were stationed nearest to Le Pas. When news of the blow reached them, nothing had been able to hold them, neither distance nor fatigue from the moment that they had found it would be possible for them to arrive in time for the funeral. Around their Bishop's coffin resting upon two wooden trestles, they represented the small but valiant phalange of missionaries whom the venerable deceased had formed, directed and borne onward to many apostolic conquests throughout almost inaccessible solitudes of his immense vicariate during the twenty-three years of his episcopate. It was because of this that they would yield to none the painful task of carrying to the grave his beloved and glorious remains.

#### Glory and humility

Yes, Glory herself came to sing at the tomb of this poor Bishop of the Indians. The newspapers a little familiar with the vigorous personality, the intense religious life, the interminable journeys and the splendid works of His Excellency Bishop Charlebois, have

showered his coffin with the most magnificent praises. They have put his name into every echo of the country. This humble man has made far more noise since his death than during his life. His last breath seems to have given free course to the sentiments of admiring veneration inspired by his noble bearing, the entirety of his belonging to God, and his indomitable energy, which had hitherto been held captive on every lip by his extraordinary humility. If one could assemble all the pages written under the pressure of regrets occasioned by his death, and the incidents concerning him that gratitude desires to engrave for the future, the result would be the portrayal of one of the most attractive figures who ever illustrated the Canadian Episcopate and one of the careers the most filled with Canadian ecclesiastical history.

He who so disdained worldly honors and was so indifferent to the appreciation of men, desired to remain as simple in death as he had been in life. He had asked for a coffin worth but a few dollars, and funeral rites such as are given to the poor; he had insisted that they be as free from pomp as would he suited to his dignity. His last wishes were respected. His body rests among the dead of his episcopal city, at the foot of the cross in the common cemetery. But the splendor of the vestments of eight archbishops and bishops, the presence of twenty-one priests, the devout crowd that overflowed the Cathedral, the sincere tears which the mere mention of his virtues by his panegyrists drew from every eye, the numerous rosaries, dear now as relics, that were made to touch the cold hands which held the poor wooden cross that every Oblate carries to the grave, his beautiful white beard framing his wholly kindly, straightforward, grandly energetic countenance threw a light as it were from the Beyond upon the sombre majesty of death; made a picture of incomparable richness and illuminated the victim life of this great missionary with an aureole of triumphant glory.

#### **The Requiem**

The Cathedral's only bell announced the beginning of the funeral services at ten o'clock. Bishop Lajeunesse, O.M.I., Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin presided. Father C. Charlebois, O.M.I., was Assistant Priest. Father E. Charlebois was deacon, and Father N. Doyon, O.M.I., was sub-deacon. The ceremonies of the Requiem Mass were under the direction of Father Dubé, and Father Cabana, O.M.I.

#### **The funeral orations**

After the Gospel His Excellency Bishop McGuigan pronounced a touching funeral oration in English. Taking for his text a pas-

sage from the Acts of the Apostles, he made the scene of St. Paul's farewell to his beloved Ephesians live all over again. "And there was much weeping among them all... being grieved most of all... that they should see his face no more." (Acts XX, 37-38).

"It is thus," said the orator, "that we have come together from far and near, united in heart and sympathy with Bishop Lajeunesse who was attached by so many ties of nature and grace to Bishop Charlebois to whom we have come to pay our last respects; whose good face we shall see no more." Then he retraced boldly the career of the Vicar Apostolic, a career that had always been so progressive and so picturesque, stressing in particular his spirit of faith and charity, his attachment to his missionary vocation, his love for the Indians, and the numberless trials by which it had pleased God to try His faithful servant, and make his work more fruitful. He concluded by saying that the Cathedral of Le Pas, its spacious and convenient Bishop's House, its separate school and splendid Hospital would constitute a monument to the memory of any bishop, but the most enduring monument for Bishop Charlebois will be the one he has built in the hearts of his flock.

Bishop Prud'homme then spoke an eloquent panygeric in French of which THE PATRIOTE is happy to give its readers the full text upon its front page.

#### Absolutions and interment

The five Liturgical absolutions by which the Church bids farewell to her deceased bishops, in recommending them to the Divine Mercy, were given at the end of the Mass by Bishops Breynat, Melanson, Sinnott, Yelle and Lajeunesse.

The procession was then formed for the march to the parochial cemetery which is situated more than a mile from the church. Every automobile in the city had been requisitioned for the occasion, and they had great difficulty in breaking out a path in the deep snow with which the country was already covered. They had dug the grave at the foot of the big cross, for the first Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin Father P. Dubeau, O.M.I., founder of the mission of St. Teresa, about two hundred miles north of the great Lake Winnipeg, said the last prayers. The great Patroness of the Missions, who partly owed this beautiful title to Bishop Charlebois, had, so to say, arranged to be represented at the funeral of her missionary client by the guardian of the post that carries her name to the extreme limits of the Vicariate. Father Dubeau who had been ill in bed for two months was convalescent in time to assist at the death of Bishop Charlebois. He was only waiting for an aeroplane to depart in order to rejoin the three lay Brothers whom he had been obliged to leave without a priest, and without Mass.

At the repast which followed, and which had been graciously provided by the Grey Nuns at St. Anthony's Hospital, the following gentlemen sat down with the clergy: Mr. C. R. Neely, Mayor of Le Pas; Dr. Elliott, representing the Government of Manitoba; Mr. B. M. Stitt, M.P., the representative of the Premier of Canada; and a few other lay men. Father Dubé read several of the principal messages of sympathy addressed to Bishop Lajeunesse on the sorrow occasioned by the death of His Excellency Bishop Charlebois to the Church and State of Canada.

#### Those present

Besides the clergy already mentioned as assisting at the funeral we note: Father O'Neil, representing the Bishop of Edmonton; Father Martineau, representing the College of Assumption; Father Ubald Langlois, O.M.I., Provincial of the Alberta-Saskatchewan Province; Father Beaupré, O.M.I., of St. Boniface; Father Marchand, rector at Le Pas; Father Lefebvre, O.M.I., of Mackenzie; Father Delmas, O.M.I., of Duck Lake, Sask.; Father N. Gilleux, O.M.I., of Cumberland House; Father Duplain, O.M.I., of Churchill; Father Ročan, of St. Agathe, St. Boniface; Father Charron, Prince Albert; Father Myre, St. Boniface; Father Lirette, Prince Albert; Father Dagust, Prince Albert; Father R. P. Doyon, Sturgeon Landing; Father Trudeau, Le Pas; Father Dubé, Le Pas; Brother Jean, O.M.I., Le Pas; Brother Ménard, O.M.I., Cross Lake; Brother R. F. St. Arnaud, Le Pas; Brother R. F. Bouchard, O.M.I., Beauval; Sister St. Ovide, Presentation Sisters, of Duck Lake; Mr. B. Stitt, representing the Hon. Mr. R. B. Bennett, Premier of Canada; Dr. Elliott, representing the Hon. Mr. Bracken, Premier of Manitoba; Monsieur Schmidt, representing the French Canadians of the West, and the Chief and two Councillors of the Indian Reserve of Le Pas.

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### THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY BISHOP OVIDE CHARLEBOIS, O.M.I.

The Vicar Apostolic requests that the cost of his coffin does not exceed \$40, and that he be buried in the little cemetery beside the Saskatchewan River.

Le Pas, Manitoba. — Bishop Ovide Charlebois, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, and Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin, declares in a testament of less than a hundred words, that he possesses absolutely

nothing and that therefore he can leave nothing to his natural heirs. He explains that in signing contracts he has done so only on behalf of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation, that all the advantages resulting from these acts belong to the Corporation, as do all the obligations they impose. He asks that the cost of his coffin be limited to \$40, and that he be buried in the little cemetery beside the Saskatchewan River.

### FUNERAL ORATION

Pronounced by His Excellency Bishop Prud'homme

....."*Bonum certamen certavi, cursum consumavi, fidem servavi. In reliquo reposita est mihi corona justitiæ, quam reddit mihi Dominus in illa die justus iudex.*"

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As for the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the Just Judge will render to me in that day."

(II Tim. IV, 7-8)

Your Excellencies,

My Brothers,

It is scarcely more than a few months since I had the happiness of assisting at the consecration of the coadjutor Bishop of the Vicariate Apostolic of Keewatin. Our hearts were filled that day with a double joy. A new Bishop had taken his place in the ranks of the Hierarchy as a lieutenant of Holy Church. But there was something more touching, more joy-giving still in the event because the consecrator, who was the uncle of the new bishop and a veteran of many a battle of zeal, and all the victories of a long apostolate, and loaded with years and merits, was at last to lay aside his shield and enjoy a repose which had been well merited in this evening of his beautiful apostolic, missionary life.

We were far from thinking then that death would so soon come to fell this sturdy oak tree which had resisted so many tempests and triumphed over so many of life's storms. Alas! the impenetrable designs of God have taken him away from our affection, and our veneration Bishop Charlebois is no more. Death has for ever

sealed his lips and closed his eyes upon this world of misery and exile.

*Bonum certamen certavi.* Yes, he was a valiant fighter in the army of the soldiers and lieutenants of Christ. Born in the Province of Quebec, and belonging to a family made illustrious by its beautiful nobility of faith, and ancestral traditions, the humble Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin brought to his service of God the force and energy of soul, that he was to spend for forty-six years in the immense task of evangelizing the Indians of the Arctic regions. God seems to have fashioned him for rude combats and arduous tasks. Physically robust, tall in stature, he was able to defy the long days of walking, the prolonged wanderings over the snow with the dog-trains, briefly, all the many obstacles of missionary life. His moral never wavered, either on account of weakness, or because of the trials which God never spared him. His energy always had a reserve of zeal and devotedness for the carrying on of his works, and the accomplishment of every duty. Certainly he was not one of those who fight with the sword, but he was a valiant soldier in all that was good, and pure, and upright, in all noble and saintly causes that might contribute to assuring the benefits of civilization and religion to his dear Indians. He was ever the noble and loyal servant of Holy Church. If any man may say with St. Paul: "I have fought the good fight", it is certainly he.

Nothing could more surely prove that, than the works of zeal that are stamped by the seal of his apostolic labor. Evangelizer of the Indians, he multiplied missions, institutions, and chapels in his immense Vicariate Apostolic. They who understand a little of work and functions of a missionary bishop will not find it difficult to picture the combats, struggles, trials and sufferings of every kind that made his life a long, slow martyrdom. They will understand the daily conflict of the will against these rigors of the apostolic life in the icy North; they will be able to realize the sorrowful crucifixion of the Bishop's heart in those terrible solitudes of the icy steppes, facing the always arduous task of his life as a missionary. The conditions of this life left him no choice; he had to be a hero then and there, to walk on unflinchingly toward the conquest of souls, to be ever disposed to lay down his life for the sheep, or the defence of the rights and privileges of his high functions. Bishop Charlebois was truly of the tempering of unsung heroes, of these giants of the apostolate who know how to stand fast and carry the cross of Christ into every place to which they are carried by their zeal and love for God. One never sees in him anything of the dreamer; he was as much a practical man as an intrepid apostle, yet moderate, resolved, rich in wisdom with the



prudence of common sense, and simple with the sublime simplicity which is the lot, and the secret of great men.

The heroic poems of great deeds portray for us the ideal knight in his white armour, a handsome cavalier mounted upon a snow white war horse who sacrifices all the joys of life for the honor of fighting the battles of the weak, and in pursuing the ever fleeing phantom of the glorious deeds of a doughty knight. The poor and desolate regions of the North which has been so well called "The Great White Silence", have often witnessed the passing of another noble knight with a patriarchal beard, poorly clad and drawn by dog-sleds along the roads of his apostolate, as he toured the vast spaces of his diocese, no more in pursuit of the phantom of world glory, but preaching Christ's Gospel to his poor children of the prairie, baptizing, comforting the afflicted, assisting so many cases of physical and moral misery; correcting the superstitions and the vices of these poor folks who were still buried in ignorance and darkness. He celebrated the Sacrifice of the Mass beneath his tent, and poured out upon these primitive tribes of people the Blood which has saved the world. What years of labor! What incessant fatigues! Hunger, thirst, a very martyrdom of cold, as Pius XI said so well, opposition or carelessness in his neophytes! How shall we number all the sacrifices attached to the memory of the dear and lamented departed whom we mourn today?

*Cursum consummavi*. It was so on that morning of November 20, the eve of the Presentation of the Immaculate Virgin, whom he venerated and to whom he prayed with such constant fervor. He rendered his beautiful soul to God. *Cursum consummavi*, I have finished my course, yes, an apostolic course that has rarely been equalled in our country. There is no need to rehearse the different stages of his long career in this place; his works speak more eloquently than anything we might say. The press of the whole country has recounted for us the heroic achievements of the apostolate of this valorous Missionary Bishop of the North, they have been pleased to call him. And we can say in all truth that his labors are written in all our hearts in ineffable characters of gratitude and affection.

*Fidem servavi*, I have kept the faith. Faith strong and generous, drawn from the depths of profoundly Christian family. His apostolic life proves it to have been no dead faith, but a conquering faith, labors of the apostolate for the extension of God's kingdom, and the promotion of the interests of the Church. Yes, he loved the Church passionately, and recoiled from no obstacle in order to extend her conquests. Faithful to the noble traditions of his religious family, he was ever anxious at all times to push forward the frontiers of faith and civilization. One might call his life a treatise on faith, and his

personality a sermon.

His struggles in defence of the educational rights of the Church; whether in Ontario, or Manitoba, or Saskatchewan, as well as his dignified and noble attitude whenever his own country was assailed, made of him a champion of its rights.

*In reliquo reposita est mihi corona justitiæ.* Yes. It is just that the faithful combatant in the evening of his life should expect from the good Master the recompense of his battle in the cause of truth.

Such was the courageous Bishop whom we mourn; whose mortal remains lie before us. Sorrow fills the heart of his nephew and coadjutor with whom he had lived under the same roof, whom he loved as a son. The church is draped in mourning; the plaintive strains of the *Kyrie eleison* which began slowly at first and issue in a vibrant and rending appeal to the Divine Mercy, and the chant of the *Miserere* attune us all to sorrow. We are mourning for him who was a model missionary bishop, the honor of the Church in Western Canada, the friend of the Indians to whom he gave such great care; the friend of Catholics, and non-Catholics alike who all venerated him, and, since his humility can no longer suffer from our praises, let us say here that he was the glory of this Catholic Church for which he would willingly have given his life, not alone in the halting places of sickness, but in the sacrifice of martyrdom.

Farewell Venerable Bishop, tender Father, benevolent Friend! Our broken hearts bring you today the tribute of their tears and their prayers. You have left us for a better world, and in a little while the whole liturgy of the dead will gather itself together in this moving antiphon: "*Ego sum resurrectio et vita*," "*I am the resurrection and the life*". It is the cry of faith, from Heaven that will come and lighten all our mourning. You then, O venerable and holy Bishop, can chant your deliverance in a flight of thankfulness. *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel*. You will be able to chant that canticle of Zachary (Luke I), you who have so loved God and the Church.

Give him, O Lord, eternal rest in the bosom of God, and may the unfailing light shine upon him for ever.

Extracted from *Le Patriote de l'Ouest*,  
of Wednesday, November 29th, 1933.

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## FUNERAL OF BISHOP CHARLEBOIS ATTENDED BY PRELATES OF WEST

The Pas witnesses solemn function as first Vicar-Apostolic is laid to rest. Archbishop McGuigan and Bishop Prud'homme deliver funeral orations.

The Pas, Man., Nov. 25. — With all the pomp and ceremony accorded a departed prelate of the Holy Catholic Church, the Pontifical High Mass of Requiem was celebrated this morning in the cathedral of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in final tribute to the life and works of the Rt. Rev. Ovide Charlebois, O.M.I., late vicar-apostolic of Keewatin who died last Monday morning.

Throughout the week of sorrow, the remains of the pioneering missionary lay in state in his headquarters of the diocese, and at 10 o'clock this morning more than 40 prelates, priests, and missionaries, Sisters of Charity, Christian Brothers, and officials of religious and Catholic social orders gathered to pay homage in solemn services.

### Procession.

Long before the following of the Cathedral bell announced the moment of prayer, a procession of persons from Eastern and Western Canada, from the Prairies and the Churchill country, made their way to the church, where beneath the black and white mourning draperies of the nave, they bowed in silence before the bier of a departed soul they came to honor.

Although crowded to capacity, and then to standing room, the cathedral found a place for all those who knew Bishop Charlebois; those who, as members of the faithful, had received his ministrations; those who knew him as a laborer in the mission fields; those who remembered him as a builder of monumental churches, of hospitals, schools and civic works; and those who cherished an endearing memory of an approachable, kindly-disposed man, who lived with the poor and died with the poor, leaving a wealth of friendships across the continent.

### Governments represented

Early to arrive were B. M. Stitt, M.P., representing the Federal Government; Dr. H. H. Elliott, on behalf of the Manitoba Government; C. R. Neely, Mayor of The Pas; and the Body of Councillors. To these were added Officials of Public Bodies, Executives of Societies and Clubs, men and women prominent in the business and industrial life of the North; citizens of half a dozen faiths and as many nationalities gathered together in the common bond of sympathy; sharing one another's loss.

At 10 o'clock the members of the Clergy were in their places in the chancel, facing the bier, flanked by the royal purple and gold, emblematic of heavenly kingship; symbolic of the supreme and the infinite, toward which the eyes of worshipping subjects turned; then to rest on vestments of the priesthood, earthly representatives of Almighty Power, in their respective orders; guides and guardians of Christians.

### Processional

As the organ offered the Requiem processional, members of the Clergy, the Grey Nuns, and Sisters took their places.

The Rt. Rev. Martin Lajeunesse, succeeding Vicar-Apostolic, nephew and for many years secretary, to the departed bishop, occupied his throne to the left, facing the vacant throne of Bishop Charlebois to the right of the altar.

While Bishop Lajeunesse celebrated the High Requiem, priests at altars, below and upon either side, repeated Low Masses for the dead.

The children's choir united with the male choir in the offertory of sacred music; sopranos and altos, lending sweet enchantment to the strength and robustness of mature voices.

### Music of Centuries

Music that harkened down the centuries to the birth of the Church; blending with the mother tongue of the service; Rome encompassing time, and reaching into the distances to conduct her high ritual for one who lived simply in the faith.

Two sermons of consolation were offered; the first by Archbishop McGuigan, Regina, who spoke in English; the second by Bishop Prud'homme, Prince Albert, who addressed the congregation in French.

### Sermon of Archbishop McGuigan

The funeral oration of His Grace Archbishop McGuigan was as follows:

*"There was much weeping among them, being grieved that they would see his face no more. (Acts XX, 38.)* My Lords, Archbishops and Bishops, Venerable members of the Clergy, dearly beloved in Christ Jesus.

"There are few passages of Holy Writ as touching, tender and pathetic as that which describes the parting of the great Apostle St. Paul from the clergy of the Church of Ephesus when, before embarking, he knelt down and wept with them on the shore and they 'wept and embraced him being grieved that they would see his face no more.' (Acts XX, 38.) In like manner, dearly beloved, we are gathered from far and near this morning in union of heartfelt sympathy with His Excellency, the new Vicar-Apostolic of Keewatin, who was bound by so many ties of nature and of grace to his uncle and spiritual father - we are gathered together to bid farewell to another Apostle, the Apostle of Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the Most Rev. Ovide Charlebois, whose kind face we shall look upon no more. You, my dear Bishop and Fathers of Mary Immaculate, with the faithful of this Cathedral parish, and indeed the whole body of citizens of The Pas, are bowed down in unlooked for and staggering grief. You mourn the death of him who, by the dignity of his high office and his personal devotion to your highest religious, spiritual and civic interests, endeared himself to your hearts. Through tear-dimmed eyes you see the receding vision of a life well lived and his life work well done. With lips that quiver in the grip of grief, his whole north country bids him this morning an affectionate and grateful farewell.

Reverence for the person of Bishop Charlebois, for the Oblate family of which he was a distinguished member, and for the Episcopal office which he so worthily held for well-nigh twenty-three years demand that a farewell word be spoken in his honour. And yet, dearly beloved, I know not what thoughts to express or what words to clothe them in as we gather around this altar in sorrow. It would be difficult for anyone to bring into orderly review the striking events of an apostolic life, distinguished by such wealth of virtue, such strenuous endeavour, such high ideals, such splendid achievements. It would be quite impossible for any words of mine to tell to your satisfaction, dear priests and religious of this vast Vicariate, what he was

to you who knew his rare excellence and patient fatherly kindness, through long and frequent intercourse. It is difficult to measure what life has meant to this Vicariate which he founded midst poverty and self-sacrifice of every kind and which he has served so long and so faithfully; to this Northwest where for nearly half a century he was a true, though humble and unobtrusive leader; and to this country generally whose religious life has been influenced by his Apostolic labours. The manifestations of sorrow seen here this morning and witnessed throughout Western Canada when the news flashed over the wires of his unexpected death on Monday last, speak of a loss which is genuine and universal.

"There is no need to speak at length of his deep spirit of faith, of his ardent charity, of his truly Apostolic spirit. You, dear brother priests, have known his honesty of purpose, the simplicity of his childlike faith, the tenderness of his heart, the Catholicity of his affections. He lived the noble rule of St. Paul: 'I will spend myself and be spent for your souls,' 'Impendar at superimpendar.' He put complete trust in Divine Providence and became all things to all men, that he might gain all to Christ. The charity of Christ filled his heart because he was a true priest of God, a faithful religious of Mary Immaculate, a noble Bishop and Apostle of Jesus Christ.

"True Priest and devoted Apostle! Yes, to Bishop Charlebois may well be applied these words of Holy Writ: 'Behold a great Priest who in his day, pleased God and was found just.' Born in a deeply religious family of sturdy French Canadian stock at Oka, in the province of Quebec, early in life he heard the voice of God calling him, as the Master Himself had called Andrew and Peter. 'Come after me and I will make you a fisher of men.' Thus in the College of L'Assomption near Montreal, in the Oblate Noviciate of Lachine and at the Scholasticate of Ottawa, he, day by day, stepped closer and closer into the footsteps of Christ, gradually ascending the altar where he would touch the very hem of Christ's garment. It was on July the seventeenth, 1887, that he knelt for ordination at the hands of the saintly, the gentle, the venerable Bishop Grandin, whose cause of beatification is now before the Holy See. Inspired, doubtless, by the devouring zeal of Bishop Grandin, he offered himself to the missions of the Northwest. He came to save the souls of the Indian tribes who 'sat in darkness and the shadow of death' — souls for whom the Sacred Heart of the Saviour shed His Blood on the crimsoned heights of Calvary. He heard the voice of God demanding

the sacrifice of all that he held near. 'Go out from thy people and thy father's house and come into the land that I will show you'. Hence it was that shortly after his ordination he bade adieu to his native province to become a missionary among the lowliest of God's children."

#### Labored in West

"The first sixteen years of his priesthood were spent at St. Joseph's mission, Fort Cumberland, in Saskatchewan, where, by his devotion to the sick and his unfeigned love for his Indian children, he soon gained the affection of all. Transferred to the Indian school at Duck Lake, his name is written in letters of gold on the annals of that institution.

"Thus for twenty-three years as a bishop, did he sacrifice his life to Jesus through Mary, '*Ad Jesum per Mariam*', according to his own motto. During forty-six years, therefore, he was an ambassador of Christ and dispenser of the mysteries of God. Years of sacrifice, of self-annihilation, of humility, of hidden labour for and with God, for the extension of His Kingdom. Years of loneliness with no one but the Blessed Sacrament to comfort him in the isolated mission of Lake Cumberland. Years of truly humble service among his beloved Indians and half-breeds when, in poverty and solitude, he cared for the Master's cause. Years among his well-loved charges of the school of Duck Lake during which he brought Christ's own personality in touch with the souls He had redeemed. This unlocks the secret of the deep reverence and filial love in which the good Father Charlebois was held by the Indian tribes to whom he ministered in his earlier years. They saw in him the Good Shepherd of souls, the kind and merciful Master, Christ Himself.

"Truly, dear brethren, through his eyes they saw the eyes of God to shine and through his lips they heard God's word. In each of his hands as he raised them up to bless, they saw the wounds that dripped on Calvary and his feet on the altar stairs bore the same marks as those which the Magdalen kissed. As they heard his voice in the confessional, they heard the voice of Him who bade the sinner. 'Go and sin no more'. As they saw him in his daily life bringing comfort and consolation to the poor, the sick and the afflicted, they realized that the words of the Gospel were fulfilled: '*Pauperes evangelizantur*', 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them'. They saw in him the Good Shepherd who went about doing good in the days of old, they

saw Him who had compassion on the multitudes, who soothed the sorrowful and bound up the broken hearted. The great charity and goodness of his heart drew all souls to him and through him to Christ, for he was a true missionary a priest after God's own heart.

"But the day came when Father Charlebois was called to the exalted office of Bishop of the Church of God. He had learned to obey and therefore he was placed in command. He had learned to serve in humility and lowliness and therefore he was invested with authority. Then opened for him a wider field for his apostolic labours when he was named Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin. Then with mitred brow and staff in hand he was called upon to teach to rule and sanctify his spiritual children of this vast district. I need not tell you that, in this capacity, he was the very soul of the great work accomplished here by the Oblate Fathers aided by a few secular priests since the erection of this Vicariate in 1910. His priests and co-laborers will tell you that they soon learned by experience to feel that they had as leader, a father full of vigilance, diligence, judgment and charity, who showed the deepest interest in all persons and matters under his care, who rejoiced in the success of his assistants and sympathized with them in their trials. Like St. Paul, he rejoiced with those who rejoiced and wept with those who wept. His prudence and wise counsel were at the service of all. For, urged by the charity of Christ, he freely lent his services to whatever work would extend the kingdom of God.

"Not content with supplying the pressing needs of his missions he built up a flourishing parish and missionary centre at The Pas. He established the Scholasticaté of Beauval and interested himself in better educational institutions for his Indian children. This very cathedral in which we worship today, the parish school near by, the fine religious institutions that surround us, particularly St. Anthony's hospital, eloquently proclaim his zeal for the beauty of God's house, his love for your children, his care of the sick and dying. I was going to say that these buildings would be his monument. But no — *'Ezegi monumentum ære perennius'* — grateful affection for him is enshrined in the hearts of his sorrow-laden priests and people in this north land, his name shall be spoken in benediction from generation unto generation.

"We are indeed grieved that we shall look upon his face no more, but we do not sorrow as those who have no hope. God is not unmindful of his soldiers of the cross. Bishop Charlebois has fought the good



fight, has finished his course, has kept the faith and will, no doubt, receive the crown of glory promised to the good and faithful servant of Jesus Christ. He has literally left 'father and mother' and sisters and brothers and home and lands' for the name of Christ and therefore, according to the scriptural promise, he shall receive life everlasting (Matt. XIX 27-29), that life so far above every earthly joy that St. Paul, speaking of it says: 'Eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for those who love him'.

"Yet, dear brethren, we must pray for the soul of this Venerable Patriarch, the father, the friend who has left us. For more than three score years and ten, in much striving and with great fidelity, he walked in the way of the Master; but he was of the earth and therefore subject to human frailty, to error and to sin. Great was his dignity, great were his graces, but great too were his responsibilities. He has already given an account of his stewardship. God alone knows the spotlessness and purity required of a soul before it may enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

"I know that the ties that bound him to you, my dear Lord Bishop, Fathers and Brothers of Mary Immaculate, will assure for his beloved soul the gratitude of your frequent and fervent prayers. We, too, dear Brother Prelates and Brother Priests, who, though not of his religious family or his intimate associates, yet esteemed and loved him in the Holy Sacrifice, ask God to grant him a place of 'refreshment: light and peace.' You, Reverend Sisters and devoted laity, who will no longer see the familiar figure of this venerable Prelate take his place in this sanctuary where he so often came to pray and offer sacrifice — you will unite your suffrages and your prayers with ours and beseech the Eternal Father, in Whom he trusted as a child, to look with clemency and mercy upon his soul.

"Especially this morning, as this solemn funeral dirge is sung and as the last solemn absolution and blessing of Holy Mother Church, let us all join in the fervent prayer and supplication that he may enter speedily into the joy of the Lord.

"May the angels lead him into Paradise. May the holy standard-bearer, St. Michael bring him into holy light. May Mary Immaculate, Queen of Heaven, receive her Oblate. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. Amen."

## TRIBUTE TO BISHOP CHARLEBOIS

In its issue of Nov. 20th., the Northern Mail, enterprising daily of Le Pas, pays the following tribute to the memory of Bishop Charlebois:

## « Bishop Charlebois »

"In the death of Bishop Ovide Charlebois, Northern Manitoba loses a man who contributed more than any other person to the history and early development of this country.

"A pioneer who saw The Pas grow from a trading post, a man of progress and a man of implicit faith in Northern Manitoba's future greatness, Bishop Charlebois was an important link between this new north-country and the older and more established east.

"His work was Church work. To that, without stint, he gave his strong body and his brilliant mind, but in giving his life to his church he gave something also to the north country. He built a great diocese. He gave it hospitals and schools. He gave it progress and development and civilization. And so his name will live forever, not only in the annals of his own organization, but in the history of Western Canada.

"It was in the service of his church that he contracted the illness which brought his death. In the long years of labor he gave to the country he had never spared himself. He had never sought the comforts of the fireside. He was a man of action, of summer trails and winter journeys. All the seasons of the year had found him more often in the far-flung outposts of his huge Northern Territory than in his own home and even advancing years failed to curb his devotion to his duty.

"It was the cold and hardship of a Northern trail which brought his death. It would have been his wish to remain on duty until the final hours of life, giving his last energy to the work which had been his lifework.

"His death leaves a gap in Northern Manitoba which cannot be filled because of his associations with the past, because of his tireless struggle to build a great diocese and a great north.

"That diocese will be his monument".

Extracted from *The Northwest Review*,

of Saturday, December 2nd, 1933

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